Chapter Five

Ethical Consciousness

Value and the Conceptual World

One of the notable deficits of scientific theory is its inability to account for those phenomena of human experience that are summarized in the notion of value. Probably the reluctance of science to recognize value stems from the intuition that the basis of value is ultimately subjective; therefore value would have no place in an absolutely objective scientific method. However, science is the intellectual activity of human beings, and as such it is unable to free itself from the inevitable subjective component of cognition, however much it might strive to do so. Furthermore, there would arise some question whether such an avoidance of all value was indeed desirable, because to the extent that valuation is an intrinsic component of knowledge, its systematic elimination from scientific thought results in a deceptive presentation of scientific fact and in a distortion of scientific reasoning. Thus, even apart from other significance that it might possess, the study of value should be fundamental to scientific theory, if only because 'truth' is of the essence of scientific thought, and 'truth' is meaningful only as a concept of value.

Some measure of value is implicit in all perception and in all action. It is to this value that we refer when we delight in beauty or when we praise the good. Memory and anticipation also share in value. It reaches into the past to embrace former actions of my own; it involves deeds of other human beings like myself. The so-called actions of institutions and of governments are also adjudged good or bad. Even some events in nature that come to pass without human intervention or assistance seem to imply value when they affect matters of human concern. Some events impress us as more important than others, but as we carefully survey the content of our thought, we find not a single event that has not some significance in a potential relationship, nor any object that could exist without the value that its very integrity implies.

As soon as one abandons his prejudice against value as the component of experience, he will find that although scientific theory pretends indifference to the implications of virtue or of beauty, yet the world of our knowledge closely examined bears the signature of value in all of its objects and in all of its events. The event is characterized as such by an intrinsic value ascribed to it. Each object is constituted as an entity distinct from its surroundings also by value. Similarly, each perception that we have of an image in nature is tinged

with valuation. Every action constitutes a specific valuation of a moment in time. When we attempt to assign value to some historical event, we do so with a view to its apparent consequences. The value of an object is sometimes considered to reside in its appearance and structure; we then call it esthetic. Otherwise the value of an object is inferred from its relationship to other objects and we call it functional. If we compared our conceptual scheme of world to a rug of rich design, the function of value might be held analogous to that of the knots which though invisible to the surface bind the fabric into a coherent whole.

Customarily we draw a major distinction between good and bad, between positive and negative value. However, in view of the common disagreement concerning goodness or badness, and especially since value seems to inhere in many neutral objects and events, it is plausible and far more consistent to consider values positive and negative opposed primarily not to each other but to the absence of value. Thus we might consider value not a mere ~~quality~~ ornament added to an already complete entity; in a much more compelling sense we would consider value to be the very ~~quality~~ essence by virtue of which we recognize an object or an event as such. In common parlance we seem to take account of this circumstance when we substitute for the word 'good' the

term 'real'. We speak for example of a real car and we mean a vehicle that exhibits in abundance the qualities that we expect of a car. Conversely, we use the term 'poor' synonymously with the word 'bad', in that sense in which is implicit the loss not of some extrinsic cause for praise, but some deficiency of the very object described. There is a strict sense in which value is never dependent upon consequence or relation, a sense in which value always seems to inhere only in the object itself or in the event. Such a definition of value acquires particular significance in view of our previous conclusion that the integrity of object and event as such is to a large though indeterminate degree a reflection not of natural constitution but of the synthesizing faculty of our minds. We may surmise that the quality which makes an event ~~to~~ appear as it does, and the quality that makes an object distinct ~~to be recognized as such~~, are none other than their respective values. It is plausible that these values, by which object and event exist, might be projections of our own intelligence upon the givenness of nature. In that case, valuation should enter into all our cognitive intellectual activity, and in point of fact prove inseparable from it.

Valuation and the conceptual world stand in an ambiguous relationship to one another. If implicit judgments of value inhere in all conceptualization, yet we are most reluctant

to recognize that our conceptual activity might have any affinity to value whatsoever. Valuation of one kind or another does play an important role in our judgment in many fields; and we have invented a consistent pattern of concepts to represent such valuation for us. We rely upon value theories of ethics and esthetics in many circumstances, and the complexity and intricacy of such theories leave nothing to be desired. Yet so far as knowledge is concerned, value is excluded and despised. The antagonism between concept and value follows already from the definition of concept that we have given. To the extent that all our ~~products~~ concepts are products of self, they are determined by and their meaning is dependent upon valuation. But to the extent that these concepts presume to be entities independent of self, frequently seeming to reflect and to exhaust reality as they do, they will deny their origins in subjective experience. Concepts are reluctant to admit value because value implies subjectivity, while the scientific concept pretends to be entirely objective. Thus the dichotomy between concept and value appears as an inevitable reflection of our intellectual activity.

These difficulties arise primarily from our misapprehension of conceptual knowledge. One misconception leads to another, and because we do not recognize our conceptual world for what

it is, we deny that conceptual knowledge should admit value. By the same token, knowledge is every much at a loss when an explanation of value in the **specific** instance is demanded of it. The conceptual world, as we have noted, is notoriously impervious to explicit ethical and esthetic valuation. The common sense view of reality that is summarized in our academic knowledge holds no brief for virtue or beauty. With regard to our knowledge about it, the good appears as an illusion, and beauty seems like an empty dream. We have become hardened to ignoring the discrepancies between concept and value. From time to time the pointed awareness may well trouble us that something is amiss when knowledge is ignorant of the beautiful and of the good. Yet we have learned to accept this incongruity. Whatever misgivings we may temporarily entertain are obtunded by our belief that knowledge is sovereign to valuation. Whatever value may be, if anything, some day science will provide its explanation. We would like to consider the present inability of knowledge to explain valuation to be temporary and accidental, like so many other ambiguities of our conceptual world merely awaiting a sufficiently vigorous assault of scientific method before capitulating to its logical prowess.

The conceptual world that we are constantly in process of elaborating for ourselves is constructed with studied disdain of ethical and esthetic valuation. When we search for facts,

we will not be concerned whether their truth be good or bad, beautiful or ugly. Indeed, we are inclined to bestow on everything that persuades us of its truth the attributes both of virtue and of beauty. What is true appears so desirable that we cannot imagine it in conflict with what is beautiful or good. Yet all benefits of such identification of knowledge and value accrue only to the credit of cognition. Phenomena of virtue or beauty, such as they might be, never appear particularly 'true' except perhaps to the poet or to the artist. In general they are always expected to cede to 'truth' whenever a conflict between value and concept seems to arise. We deliberately design our conceptual system to be 'objective', and in the process we attempt to sunder from it all personal interest, all valuative concern. The world must exist independent of our volition and desire. It seems improper that we should attempt to project into the realm of knowledge either moral purpose or esthetic value of any sort. Indeed, even if we desired to avail ourselves of them, we should be at a loss for ethical ideas adequate to the vastness and complexity of our concepts.

The conceptual world extends to include both our actions in their weakness and fallibility and the limitless expanse of nature that we infer from our apperception. The plot of ground upon which I build my house is of the same space as

is the most distant of nebulas. The second and the minute in which my efforts are exhausted are of the same temporal continuity as the thousands of years that the human race has lived and the thousand thousands of years that we infer this earth to have existed prior to this moment of consciousness. The disproportion between the dimensions of my conceptual world and the effective force of my actions produces a discontinuity in thought. This discontinuity may express itself in one of two ways. My actions may appear to be trivial in comparison with the cosmos in which I must recognize myself like a speck of dust. Otherwise, the purposefulness and intensity of my action, being real and impressive to me, will make my conceptual inferences concerning that inaccessible world seem very much unreal. In the frame of cosmic dimensions, our interests, our actions, and our valuations lose all their significance. Conversely, the ethical concern of the moment, the act that I am about to perform, the promise that I am about to fulfill, the goal that I am about to achieve are all dependent upon an intellectual orientation that differs significantly from the framework of the conceptual world. Indeed, in order for my action to become valuable at all, this action must be segregated from the totality of events; it must be distinguished from the universality of things known. What little I am able to accomplish is always dwarfed by the dimensions of a universe that I can comprehend only as concept

and that in almost every way greatly exceeds the limits of my personal experience. To be sure, ethical action requires a frame of reference of its own, but the logical scheme within which I am able to act purposefully is only superficially the same as the world of knowledge. Examined closely, the discontinuity between these two worlds will seem more and more significant until ultimately they will appear altogether distinct and irreconcilable one with another.

Consequently our thoughts are at odds with themselves. Through the power of concept and imagination our minds presume to comprehend a universe in comparison with which the individual and his efforts are trivial. We are by nature confined to a narrow sphere of activity, vexed with the transient quality of all our experience, perturbed by the evanescence of our action, and grievously disenchanted with the triviality of all that we have achieved. This incongruity of concept and value has led many an impatient and conscientious mind to deny either the world of its cognition or the world of its valuation. Frequently the just assertions of ethical and esthetic consciousness are scorned; occasionally the reality of the conceptual world is disparaged to make room for exaggerated notions of value. However, both value and concept are real, and if we are to be consistent we may deny neither one nor the other.

The incongruity of concept and value offers an extraordinary opportunity and challenge to our understanding. Esthetic and ethical valuation themselves require definition. Their force must be reconciled with the cogency of our knowledge. Such an intellectual synthesis is impeded by obstacles of custom and habits of thought. We exaggerate the importance of our knowledge; we fail to recognize our concepts for the subjective inventions that they are. With naive credulity we believe ourselves committed to attribute to them a reality that they cannot possess. On the other hand, we likewise vainly exaggerate and overinterpret the significance of our personal ethical and esthetic valuation. Even if we should succeed in explaining this conflict, our understanding of it must not be expected to obviate the discontinuity. Perhaps the logical dilemma reflects a primary psychological fact of human nature, comparable, for example, to the limitations of speech, of hearing, or of vision. If that were the case, we might expect to encounter many vestiges of such discrepancy. By the same token, a recognition of the conflict as irremediable should be most useful toward a consistent understanding of our conceptual thought.

Our experiences of value are conveniently distinguished as ethical and esthetic respectively. While this distinction is useful, it is not absolute, and we recognize many situations

where we could not properly say that valuation was exclusively ethical or esthetic. Many borderline problems can be clearly assigned to neither sphere. To facilitate this distinction, we propose to call ethical our valuation in the dimension of time. Correspondingly, valuation in the dimension of space may be called esthetic. To the extent that our apperception of reality never permits an unequivocal distinction between space and time, ethical and esthetic valuation cannot be distinguished except in theory. Insofar as time is real to us primarily in the present, ethical valuation is correspondingly limited to the present also. As soon as we project our experience of the present into the past, it becomes conceptual. Then, in as much as concepts share many of the qualities of object, valuation of events past tends to resemble an esthetic judgment. For example, our assessment of events in ancient history is qualitatively quite different from the judgments that we make concerning the present. There are many actions that we would not condone for ourselves at this moment, which actions we would not criticize as the deed of another individual at some time in the past. When we review an account of the past in our imagination, its events assume some of the qualities of objects and the duration that separates them somewhat resembles space. Extent in memory is quite uncertain; it is made definite by a

surreptitious comparison of temporal duration with spatial extent. Events then appear no longer unique; they are arranged like objects in a field of time, and the value that we attribute to them is more esthetic than ethical. By the same token, the quality of an event that makes it susceptible to ethical valuation is its propensity for serving our imagination as a potential present. In other words, we are able to understand events remote from us only by letting our imaginations transport ourselves to that place, and then judging as we would judge if we found ourselves in such a situation as the one imagined. To the extent that our judgment is predicated upon such an imaginative interchange of position, it preserves its ethical quality. Ethical judgments of the past are possible only to the extent that our imaginations are capable of equating a point in past time with a present experience.

The primary ethical valuation is limited not only to the present, it is also limited to one individual. Ethical consciousness asks: What must I do in this present moment? This question may be expanded in terms of the action that should be right and necessary for an individual such as myself to undertake under given circumstances. The systematic generalization of this question is the traditional concern of morality. Yet it is difficult to draw a line between the action of the individual

and the interests of society. No man lives to himself or acts in private. Our world is a common one, and the actions that express ourselves affect at the same time numerous fellow human beings. Consequently ethical theory is closely associated with religion, with law, and insofar as man appears a child of nature, with various branches of science. The ethical implications of these various disciplines make the study of ethics at one and the same time more difficult and more interesting. Conversely, these derivative disciplines have invariably had to accomodate themselves to the ethical theory that they found before them. They are not so independent of ethical theory as they appear, and a more compelling theory of ethics might well provide them with a firmer foundation. The practical consequences of a cogent theory of ethics are difficult to estimate.

Ethical Theories

Ethical decisions have such significance both in the lives of individuals and in the histories of societies that the attempt to formulate consistent and applicable rules of conduct is one of the most ancient undertakings of thought. It is the intention of ethical theory not only to give a reasonable account of ethical phenomena as they appear; even more important is its task of instructing men in the proper course of action and of correcting and supplementing insufficiencies and incongruities of ethical experience itself. We expect ethical theory to tell us why we act as we do in those certain situations where our decisions seem irrevocably determined. We expect ethical theory to tell us how to act in circumstances where the 'right' course of action seems uncertain. When we initially recognize ethics as a powerful force in our lives, we are inclined to assume that the majority of ethical questions carry within them their own solutions. As we examine our actions more rigorously, fewer and fewer ethical decisions appear self-evident. Yet, because of its practical intent, ethical theory is seldom if ever carried to a logical conclusion. Ultimately the most consistent theory might suggest that none of the apparent ethical maxims upon which we are accustomed to rely can stand unsupported. Then to whatever extent it is based upon

these self-evident rules of conduct, the discipline of ethics collapses. Then there becomes evident a wide gulf between theory and practice. All practical situations in which I find myself from moment to moment are far too complex to admit any simple theoretical solution.

If the most immediate ethical question asks what I must do at this present moment, the ultimate of ethical concerns is the goal or purpose of human activity in general. For, as a particular action is performed with a view toward achievement of a particular end, the totality of our actions would appear to be directed toward some general goal or purpose as yet undefined. Perhaps it is not the task of ethical theory to define such a goal, but if that goal were uncertain, then ethical theory should take account of the uncertainty. There is, in the first place, some disagreement whether what is supremely desirable for the individual is also supremely desirable for his society, and if, when the two conflict, one should be given preference over the other, and which one and to what extent. All simple solutions to this problem are dogmatic; it is quite difficult to frame an answer that will reflect the strong mutual interdependence between the individual and his society. This primary political dilemma requires more extensive consideration elsewhere. The very existence of the problem may tempt to some premature conclusions. In order to

be able to pursue our argument freely, we must insist that this question should remain open and unencumbered with prejudgments.

A different way of approaching the same problem is to ask how the goal of action, whatever it might be, would determine the individual's decision at the present moment. This is the same as to ask by what forces the individual seems compelled to virtuous action. The relationship of the action to the presumed goal is anything but clear. We usually deny the complexity of our actions, and construe them as being determined by that fortuitous purpose which seizes our attention in the instant. It is quite difficult to prove that the relationship between action and that purpose should be valid. We might readily deceive ourselves concerning both the quality of our will and the effectiveness of our action. These are further problems for the theory of ethics. It should also be able to explain the discrepancy between goals that from time to time appear desirable ends of ethical endeavor. Finally, if it were possible, ethical theory should contribute directives to aid the individual in the solution of particular ethical problems. We must review the salient characteristics of ethical theory hitherto developed to see to what extent, if at all, it succeeds in fulfilling these functions.

Because of the extraordinary importance of ethical considerations both in the life of the individual and in the welfare of society, numerous authors have expressed their views on ethics, giving to this topic a theoretical or practical treatment as their purposes warranted. In most such theories we find inherent two points of view, fundamentally contradictory, but in practice necessarily reconciled. We shall refer to these mutually contradictory opinions as the theological and the empirical view of ethics respectively. A consideration of their tenets will help to define the basic ethical problem.

What we shall refer to as a theological view of ethics is seldom identified as a unitary theory. More commonly it is recognized in fragments of opinion and prejudice that enter into almost every phase of our daily lives. By referring to it as a theological view, we note that explicitly or by implication it relies for the sanction of ethical imperatives upon deity as an element beyond human experience and even beyond the order of the natural world. Frequently it requires the term 'absolute' to buttress its injunctions, because it holds that the good toward which our actions aim is separable and independent, in short absolute of all experience. It is implied that such a good must be the same for all men, independent

of the particular occasion on which it is recognized. Ultimately all such absolute ethical values are seen to have a religious foundation; and the logical relationship between such absolute value and deity is found to be merely a matter of definition.

A theological view of ethics must assume that the good which it holds out to men as the supreme goal, should be knowable by man and should actually be known by him upon the application of reasonable effort and discretion. If the absolute good is postulated as a practical goal of human endeavor, the intelligibility of ethical values must necessarily be presupposed. To mitigate the necessary remoteness of the ideal itself, a progression of ethical value is postulated, and an appropriate link in such a chain of value is deemed accessible to every man at all times. The individual is held to know what is good; it is said to present itself to him as a reflection of divine perfection, and whether or not he wills assent to it is construed as a mere matter of individual choice. His motivation for such a choice is not always explicit; sometimes the mere possession of a virtue is assumed to be its own reward; at other times virtue is represented as a prudent down-payment for heavenly or earthly remuneration.

One of the obstacles facing such a theory is the circumstance that actions and purposes recognized to be good are frequently unattainable on account of practical difficulties. The personality of man is in danger of being crushed between the implacable injunctions of an absolute good and the insurmountable resistance of human affairs. This dilemma is frequently resolved by the argument that it should not matter whether the virtuous action was in fact performed. What seems important is the individual's wish that his virtuous action might be fulfilled; in other words his will is substituted for his action. The will to do good, in contrast with its actual accomplishment, is thought to be entirely under the control of the individual. It is ~~thought~~ assumed to be within the power of man to heed his conscience. Thus will or intention comes to be substituted for action as the final common pathway of ethical valuation. The whole course of man's life appears then not so much as a process of action but as a process of decision. Ethical choice is represented as the answer to a series of questions to which yes or no is always an adequate answer. The incongruities of such a facile emendation of ethical injunction will not escape the serious student.

The theological view of ethics does not limit itself to the specific action of the individual. It presumes to offer an evaluation of the entire range of our experience. Everything that occurs is either good or bad, and at the end of history is anticipated a day of reckoning when judgment shall be meted out to everyone in accordance with the virtues or vices of his actions. Deity is believed to recognize and to record the actions of each individual, his intentions and his dispositions. Then either in this life or in the one to come, judgment shall be passed on him, and he will receive reward or punishment in consonance with his achievements or with his transgressions. The obedient and fulfillment of the law is construed to be his salvation; transgression of the law brings about his destruction.

Not only does the realm of theological ethics encompass the entire life of the individual, but in a remarkable way the absolute good permeates the structure of society; it is reflected even in the organization of nature. Thus the individual is never isolated in his performance of ethical duty. Conscience, the spark of the divine within him, is the bond that unites man with the world order. Not only is he enjoined and guided by divinity to a general goal, but knowledge of the good permeates all of his thought and all of his action,

so that upon each occasion of decision he is able to obtain a specific directive of what is required of him. Specific knowledge of the good is generally assumed to be an integral part of our endowment for virtuous action.

Thus the theological view of ethics implies an affinity between the individual and nature. In nature the working of the absolute good is less apparent; its ethical standards are not those that apply to human beings. Nature also is good, but its 'goodness' is distinct from our own and proceeds according to laws that are only analogous to those that guide the human race. Usually the discrepancy between the virtue of nature and of man is given a purposeful explanation. The relative moral indifference of nature is construed as the opportunity for man to make a moral choice. Through his ability to distinguish between right and wrong, so it is said, man distinguishes himself from animals. It is only in the exercise of this freedom which other forms of life do not possess that we are said to become truly human. Only through man's differentiation from nature does ~~man~~ he become able to earn his own salvation.

In our awareness of ethical necessity, we are not alone. The whole realm of nature participates to an appropriate extent in the ethical scheme of reality. This is not to say

that all animate objects participate in it in the same way as does man. It is not required of each of them that they too should act in consonance with divine law. The degree to which conformance is voluntary is a function of the position of each one on the moral scale. The human being alone is able to transgress the injunction of the divine law. That is why he holds the highest place in the scale of animate beings. Lower animals are said to perform their function according to laws similar to those that guide man; however, they have no recourse to choice. They have neither the benefit of the reward, nor are they exposed to threat of punishment. Man's ability to chose is thought to determine for him his particular existence in time. The lack of choice determines for other beings other types of existence.

Absolute theories of ethics contradict the common views of modern scientific and political thought. Nonetheless, if one considers them in their applications they possess much significance. Even where they are explicitly rejected, they will be seen to enter into most of the theories that presume to displace them. Absolute views of ethics provide the only explanation that satisfies the desire of each individual for ethical significance in his actions. At the same time they make the individual susceptible to authoritative injunctions.

They tend to preserve both the integrity of personality and to sustain existing orders of society, church, and state. Indeed, it is questionable whether without absolute theories of ethics the state as we know it could exist. They provide the basis for a tranquil conservatism both in public and in private affairs. Unfortunately they lend themselves in practice to the justification of virtually any arrangement of human affairs. So far as the individual human being is concerned, absolute theories of ethics fail to live up to the promises of divine guidance that they so confidently offer.

A scientific view of human nature is not sympathetic to theological theories of ethics. Their practical personal and social merits notwithstanding, they prove ultimately unfruitful, because, relying upon a transcendental hence inaccessible source of valuation, they are insensitive to human experience and to the needs of human life. Theological ethics is inadequate to the strict examination of our environment upon which science has embarked. Its postulates are not to be derived from commonly accessible experience. For these reasons, traditional ethics has been supplanted more and more with the sceptical or critical theory to which we shall refer as empirical. In contrast to the old one which grew from tradition, the new pattern of thought seems to be derived from experience, and

to this extent the designation empirical is valid. Yet we have already shown, that between the empiricism of modern thought and the authoritarianism which it presumes to replace there is no such fundamental distinction as is usually presumed. We have suggested that this new 'empirical' theory of ethics is not necessarily closer to individual experience except in a superficial way. After all, the presumably disproved and rejected theological view was also a product of some kind of 'experience.' The overwhelming concern with our action and its anticipated consequence, the religious sentiment, the postulate of uniformity among human minds, are all products of a certain quality of experience. In a comparable way, the so-called empirical theory of ethics also requires a substantial excursion beyond what is immediately given. Empirical theories rely not upon that which is given to the individual in any particular situation and at any given moment, but they depend as do absolute theories upon logical assumptions and intellectual conventions. Empirical ethics also relies upon abstractions, concepts, summaries, interpretations and reconstructions of experience. Empirical theories of ethics like idealistic ones, must rely upon historical rationalizations, on conceptual syntheses and logical explanations of experience. Ultimately, what the empirical theory presumes to show will be no more accessible or any more susceptible to demonstration

than the assertions of ethical idealism. When we designate empirical theories of ethics as such we must be careful to recognize that we neither prejudge their efficiency nor waive our privilege to assign to 'experience' a more fundamental definition.

The empirical theory of ethics proceeds from the critical analysis of its theological counterpart. When the credit of idealistic ethics is drawn into question, we demand that it demonstrate the ideals to which it refers and that it prove the universality that it claims for them. The assumption of absolute ethics that there should be one standard of virtue, accessible and binding for all human beings, simply fails to meet all tests of practical experience. This fact can be concealed by no alternative explanations, however devious or skillfully contrived they might be. Men in fact do not have identical ideals of virtue: they do not see eye to eye in given situations; their opinions about the good seem to differ according to the circumstances in which they find themselves, depending upon their dispositions and the accidents of their environment. It is easy to disprove theological theories of ethics; indeed it is difficult for any unbiased investigator not to attack them; often they seem embarrassing even for their devoted admirers to defend.

The objections to idealistic ethics are primarily negative. They are the result of disappointment and chagrin. The assertion of empirical ethics stems primarily from the inability to discover the vaunted absolute qualities of the good; it grows from disenchantment with the dogmatic assertions of virtue that so frequently take the place of true ethical endeavor. Empirical ethics is often the consequence of genuine concern for individual and social welfare. Whatever other advantages an absolute theory of ethics might have, it invariably fails to respect both the physical and spiritual interests of the individual himself and of the society in which he lives. Absolute ethics is barren. It has neither sympathy nor remedy for the individual or for the society in distress.

On first thought it seems reasonable and even desirable that there should be a single unquestionable standard of ethics for all men, but we are quite incapable of pointing out what such a standard might be. We are distressed to note that whenever absolute ethics presents itself with the details of its presumably supernatural injunctions, these appear arbitrary if not tyrannical. At worst, this assertion of supernatural certainty is made by its self-appointed curators who presume to pontificate concerning the absolute good. Empirical ethics, by way of contrast, is prepared to accept the multifarious standards of ethical

behavior without criticism. The very discrepancies between differing ethical ideals are the convincing argument for its validity. Each system of ethics is thought to have its own justification in the social circumstances out of which it arises. Ethics is recognized as a product of human society; it appears to be one of those devices that enables the individual to cooperate constructively with his fellow men. Ethics makes it possible for men to live together in society to their mutual advantage. As such, ethics must be considered a product of social circumstance, and as society changes so do the rules men live by. The sanctions of ethics, accordingly, are never absolute, even when they appear to be so. It is likely that a deceptive appearance serves to make ethical injunction effective. Yet ethical necessity as such does not exist, and men deceive themselves whenever they presume to be listening to its voice.

The failure to recognize and account for ethical compulsion is the weakness of all empirical theories. They possess no understanding for this most striking quality of ethical concern: its apparent necessity. No amount of analysis, no measure of scepticism can obscure the circumstance that in our thoughts and in our actions we do in fact experience such a quality of necessity. To be sure, this necessity is enigmatic and disturbing; it requires

an explanation which theological views of ethics have been unable to give except in a mythical vein. Absolute ethics does not succeed in giving rational explanation of this ethical compulsion, but whereas empirical ethics ignores it entirely, absolute theories make a transcendental issue of the matter, and attribute the cogency of ethics to a divine principle. Accordingly empirical ethics becomes in the end not an explanation of human action but a mere catalogue of customs. The liberality implicit in such recognition of divergent valuations deserves praise. Nonetheless the failure of empirical ethics to enlighten us concerning the sources of ethical valuation, ~~specifically,~~ to the contrary its denial of ethical necessity, compromises its explanatory effectiveness.

The Failure of Ethical Theories

Those theories that we have reviewed prove themselves inadequate to the ethical experience. They have no consistent explanation for the compelling urge to significant and worthy action. They cannot explain away the divergence if not indeed contradictions of those actions that are frequently aspired to with equal fervor. Traditional ethical theories rely upon traditional views of self and nature. They consider self to be either an animal body, an invisible soul, or an historical personality. They accept the world as consisting of discrete objects in space and events in time. In preceding chapters we have suggested the inadequacy of such constructions of self and nature. If, then, we are confronted with antinomies within the realm of ethics that yield to no solution, we might reasonably inquire whether their intransigence might not be the consequence of the dubious presuppositions upon which traditional theory relies. We may suspect that the problems of ethical theory arise at least in part because it accepts the rationalizations of history at face value and fails to criticize the world that presents itself to us in our conceptual representations. To be sure, these conceptual schemes possess an intrinsic consistency and validity of their own; they provide a most useful and reliable basis for our thought

in many practical circumstances. But we have no reason to consider that our ethical experience should be limited by them. On the contrary, if our distinction between nature and the conceptual world were correct, why should ethics be limited to the realm of concepts? Is it not plausible that ethics should be a phenomenon of nature independent of the conceptual interpretation that is but a working model for our minds? Conceivably ethical theory will gain a new dimension if we project it upon the reality of self and nature, refusing to limit it to the conceptual world. Quite possibly some of the problems of ethics will be solved by such a projection; almost certainly those that are not solved would appear in an entirely different form.

Therefore we must take into account the conclusions reached previously concerning the actuality of self, the reality of events in time, and of objects in space. The quality of action as we have described it is of particular significance in its context, because it is action as an event that provides the primary occasion for ethical judgment. It is the event that is held to be good or evil by the theological and empirical view of ethics alike. The very indefiniteness of the event as we have described it must convincingly suggest the inadequacy of theories that uncritically rely upon it. Events are conceptual

hypotheses, strictly speaking they are not identifiable; their boundaries vary depending upon the point of view. Far from being an absolute constituent of nature, the event is but a phenomenon contingent upon our own experience; a projection of our own consciousness into the world of reality. To the extent that the classical definition of event should be invalid, ethical theory relying upon its integrity would be compromised. Then events would be common to different human beings only to a superficial extent. The common history upon which our ethical judgments usually rely would appear as conventional; the strongest support of events would be the definition and the name that we assign to them. The events established by such convention would be ~~temporary~~ relative and contingent. They would depend upon the viewpoint, ~~understanding,~~ and interest of those who undertook to evaluate them. Clearly such an historical world will never provide for events the certainty and the definition that they require if they are to be the vectors of ethical value. Otherwise when we call an event 'good', we would no longer be referring to the virtue of some discrete entity in nature but only to a conventional distinction. Under those circumstances ethical valuation would be little more than the placing of an apparently arbitrary estimation upon some specific phase of our common

interpreted world. Once we become convinced of the relative unreality of the conceptual world, the traditional task of ethical theory appears superfluous. At the same time, the assertion of self and nature as entities of consciousness will create entirely new opportunities for ethical analysis.

Ethics and Self

The difficulties of ethical theory begin to resolve themselves when the self is recognized as the focus of value. Initially such a deliberate restriction of ethical valuation may appear incongruous. The involvement of apparently ethical considerations in questions of religion, in political and social issues, in morality and law, the implication of value even in the natural world, all would seem to preclude that ethical theory might consistently be focused upon the self. Such a restriction, however, must be understood in the light of the reduction of our complex notions of society and of world to the simple confrontation of self with nature. Ethical considerations in religion, in society, in public and private historical judgments, occur as part of a conceptual system that may have its own rules and its own values, but that is ultimately dependent for its meaning upon experience as the confrontation of self and nature. We shall show that valuation is related to self in a particularly direct and compelling manner. To reduce the diverse ethical manifestations to self as their source is anything but a denial of their validity. It is merely a recognition of the fact that our conceptual world includes even our construction of ethical valuation, and conversely that valuation of historical events in no way escapes the intrinsic limitations of conceptualization.

In spite of the fact that the 'good' as the goal of ethics appears to be outside the realm of individual experience, my understanding of value, of action, and of the good is ultimately always derived from my own experience. What is 'good' will always be seen through the individual's eyes; the action that a man weighs in his mind will always primarily be his own. Thus ethical theory is dependent upon the integrity and determination of self. Indeed, the value with which ethics is concerned is primarily value for an individual. The decisive questions of ethics are: 'What must I do?' 'What is my duty?' The good is irrelevant unless it be good with respect to me. Virtue is meaningless unless it be my virtue. These considerations are more than rhetorical, nor are they expressions of an irresponsible egotism. They are reflections of the inescapable fact that self is the source of value. Many an occasion arises when the value that self places upon its own interest and upon its own experience comes into substantial conflict with public value as the conventions of society appear to dictate it. When such differences in ethical construction arise, then self revolts against the pretended domination of its own ethical value from without and asserts its integrity as the author of its own ethical valuation.

Consequently it will not only be plausible but even necessary to postulate that consciousness or self should be the source of ethics. Such a viewpoint gives the most consistent and on the whole the most satisfactory interpretation of ethical phenomena. The occasions are frequent when for reasons not entirely clear to me I desire to do good, to act virtuously, or, more generally, when I wish my actions to be of significance. Only rarely do I look to a discipline of ethics for specific guidance of my actions. Indeed, during my entire waking life I act, and the choices that conscious action implies are without exception truly ethical, even when they appear to have negligible consequences.

Classically the source of ethical value has been postulated as deity. Consequently our derivation of ethical value on the face of it appears to contradict tradition. Deity and self seem to be opposite extremes, each in its own way transcendental termini to a spectrum of accessible ethical phenomena. Yet, from a different point of view, and in a very genuine sense, deity and consciousness might well be found to have some affinity. They are both opposed to the conceptual schemata, to the events and institutions in which ethical valuation is primarily discerned. To say that God should be the source of ethical value is perhaps equivalent to saying that the source of

ethical value cannot be found in the conceptual world. By the same token that deity is transcendental to the conceptual constructions with which we represent the world to ourselves, it is plausible that our knowledge of him, whatever he may be, should be immanent to consciousness. Because I do not find God in nature, I assume that he lives beyond the natural world. But this hypothesis is paradoxical: we have shown that what is construed as nature is simply other than self. Perhaps as in mathematics, a double negative here becomes an affirmation. If I cannot discover deity in what is other than self, and if I yet have compelling reason to assume his existence, perhaps I ought not look for him so far away. It was the memorable achievement of Protestant theology to have removed the logical and social apparatus separating God and man. The Protestant reformers would not permit deity to be isolated in a conceptual world; they demanded the rational and emotional immediacy of the relationship between God and man. On first thought, this might appear to be a question of merely theological consequence. The being of God and his relationship to the individual are customarily considered purely religious matters. Nonetheless, our understanding of ethical questions will be facilitated by the recognition that our relationship to deity is not fixed, but is an hypothesis, a product of our insight and understanding, susceptible to change. The Protestant reformation expressed

at least in part the desire of man to be closer to deity; the wish to eliminate the social and logical barriers between him and the source of his being, barriers that perhaps a heightened ethical and esthetic awareness could not tolerate. We shall do well to meditate upon the incompleteness of the solutions brought forward by the reformers. Many of the questions that trouble us today are a heritage of the Reformation. The definition of deity on the one hand and the distinction of deity from self on the other, were not even recognized as problems by its theorists. The reformers would have considered it impious to inquire into the logical structure of our concepts of God; they would have considered it unnecessary to inquire into the logical structure of our concepts of self. They assumed that the being of man was self-evident; they considered the being of God beyond reason. Perhaps their limitation of theological criticism was an error. It might be both proper and profitable to take a further step in the analysis of the being of both God and man. To do so would appear nothing more than the implementation of a theological analysis that was begun four centuries ago.

Action as the Focus of Ethical Value

The event is the locus of ethical value. With this designation we distinguish between values pertaining to objects, which we call esthetic and which we shall discuss in the following chapter. The distinction between ethical and esthetic value is not always clear. Our language conceals many uncertainties of concept. When we say a man is good, or a government is good, we mean a man or a government that is likely to be the cause of good events. If we wish to designate the goodness of the man or of the government in question distinct from the events that they bring about, we contemplate a physical or intellectual structure, and our designation is no longer an ethical but an esthetic one. Events are characterized by their relationships to one another in the stream of time. Ethical value is a value that possesses temporal qualities, distinct from esthetic value as possessing spatial qualities. We showed in a previous chapter that the event that we recite as an historical fact possesses certain of the qualities of the immediate present. As the event is the projection into a conceptual world of the unitary quality of action, ethical value is primarily value in the present. It is the value of action.

In previous chapters we demonstrated the difficulty of assigning an unequivocal definition to the term action as a demonstrable event. As we consider action a focus of ethical value we must keep these difficulties in mind. There is of course no difficulty in finding examples to demonstrate the ethical quality of action. Numerous events both legendary and personal may be cited as instances of an action in which ethical value is presumed to inhere. A classical example of such an action is the Biblical account of the conduct of the Good Samaritan. When we review this story in the attempt to designate the action and its specific ethical value, we are once again confronted with the fact that such 'action' is difficult to isolate. According to the Biblical summary, the mercy of the Samaritan toward the wounded man extended over a period of days, from the time that he first saw him until he left him in the care of the innkeeper. The chronology of these actions may be recalled: The Samaritan first saw the wounded man, then had compassion on him, then went to him, bound up his wounds, poured in them oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, and there took care of him. Then on the following day there is the exchange with the innkeeper, the remuneration, the instructions, and the promise of reimbursement for subsequent nursing care. This series of events may be considered as a single act, unified by its

purpose, the intention in the mind of the Samaritan to help the stricken one. On the other hand, one may logically distinguish a series of individual actions, as they are described in the narrative, and even each of these may be further separated into numerous discrete physical motions, as we may infer from the description. First the compassion, then the approach, the first aid, for example, may each be considered a discrete action, and each of the thoughts, each of the movements of limbs comprising them likewise deserve the name of action. Because all of these motions and attitudes presumably served a single purpose and were performed with a single intent, they are suitably designated as a single act.

With this analysis of the action of the good Samaritan we have displayed our problem; if value belongs to any act at all, it belongs to this action. Yet it is not readily apparent in what the value of the action consists: our initial naive response is to say that the value of the Samaritan's action is in its consequence. We are told that the man whom the Samaritan befriended had been left half dead by his attackers. We may assume that without help he should have died; and we may credit the saving of a man's life to the Good Samaritan. This hypothesis might be summarized by saying that actions are good in proportion to the value of their consequence. As soon as we state it,

we recognize the obvious difficulties of this formula. It implies that had the Samaritan's efforts been unavailing, they should then have been devoid of ethical value. Yet it is a matter of popular wisdom that the individual who sacrifices his strength or his possessions in a cause whose success is doubtful, is if anything, a greater hero than he who sacrifices for a cause whose success is assured. We consider the man who valiantly fights a losing battle even braver than him who is sure to win.

Our inability to relate the value of the action to its actual consequences leads us to relate this value instead to the purpose or to the anticipated consequences. On the face of it, this transformation is simple and straightforward. Actually it introduces numerous and difficult problems into the picture. In the first place, the action is reduplicated. If an action occupies a certain interval in time, and if the intention precedes it, then the intention will virtually play the role of a prior action. The volitional process is in itself an action in the mind of the agent. We should be required to assume that the Samaritan 'decided' or 'made up his mind,' when he conceived the intention, and we may ask, if the value of the action resides in the intention, why was the action itself necessary to sustain the ethical value under those

circumstances? Would not the intention itself have been sufficient? Nor is it at all necessary that the intention and the actual effect of the action should coincide. For example the washing of wounds with oil and wine may enhance their healing, but conceivably it might also retard it. The cleansing of the wound may introduce a fatal infection. Under those circumstances, would the good intentions serve to sustain the ethical value of a harmful action? If with the intention to help, one does damage, is the action then good or is it bad? Conversely, it is conceivable that such actions as those of the Good Samaritan might have been performed from some ulterior motive. What if the Good Samaritan had been trying to impress some spectator not mentioned in the narrative and feigned a goodness of heart that he actually did not possess? An action that appears selfless and sacrificial is not always so. The physician who answers a midnight call may have his mind more on the fee than on the health of his patient. How then is the value of the intention to be ascertained? If the words of the agent are to serve as indicators, he might readily deceive us, and simulate a noble motive for an ulterior one. All too often, individuals presume to act from noble motives when a neutral ~~disinterested~~ observer can see only their self-interest at work. Moreover it is dubious whether an agent himself can ever be fully cognizant of the quality of his intention. If

the agent himself can never be sure, could any observer presume to define his motives with certainty? Our considerations suggest that nothing certain can be said either about the intention or about the consequence of a given action. The intention seems to be little more than a preceding or concurrent interpretation of the action. Since such interpretations are frequently arbitrary and capricious, we cannot say with certainty that ~~whether~~ an intention is good or bad, whether we perform the action ourselves or observe it performed by another. Likewise we cannot say at the time of the action whether its consequences will be good or bad. We cannot, strictly speaking, relate the intention to the action or the action to the apparent consequence. The logical precision which appears to lead to so absurd a conclusion will offend many a reader, especially if he himself is accustomed to rely upon various approximations in dealing with such problems. It is highly illuminating, how for example, the legal theorist resolves the very problems which we have raised. It is plausible to argue that in many cases the intention may be inferred from the action, and its consequences may often be anticipated with so high a degree of certainty as to leave no doubt. Such assumptions are practical and useful. They are, for example, the basis of judgment under civil and criminal law. Attempts to base theories of ethics upon them have frequently been made. Such theories

of ethics, again, have much practical value; yet they have never succeeded in providing the most significant questions with definite answers. It may be wise to avoid approximations and to see where the argument will lead us if we carry it through precisely, even when such precision seems absurd.

If the intention of the specific action cannot be determined with certainty and if likewise the consequence of the specific action is unclear, except in retrospect, then theories of ethics which generalize either concerning intention or concerning consequences cannot satisfactorily answer concerning the value of the action that I am performing at this time. Thus our analysis has precluded admission of the popular generalization that holds that one must do what is good or what our consciences demand. Neither is it reasonable that we should presume to follow a transcendental imperative, that we should hope to translate our action, at least potentially, into universal law, or that we should act that the human beings among whom we live should always be ends rather than means for our action. We simply do not know ourselves well enough to say that the motive of our action is lust or love, generosity or prodigality, greed or responsibility. Likewise it is unrealistic to demand that our actions should serve anyone's advantage, neither that of our fellow men, nor our own; or that our action should add to the greatest

benefit of the greatest number of people, or to the preservation of the species. Here again if we refuse to accept approximations, we cannot be sure what is good for ourselves, we know much less what is good for our neighbor; and we cannot possibly have an inkling of what is good for the whole world now or in times to come. Such approximations at any rate, would be altogether inadequate to the compelling necessity of ethical action.

All of these theoretical objections notwithstanding, the Samaritan performed his action. And every day uncounted individuals proceed in actions that they consider to be good and make many and great sacrifices for such actions. Perhaps we can say nothing more convincing about the act of mercy that the Good Samaritan performed, than that putting ourselves in his place we should wish to act similarly. This desire does not spring from the hope of a reward either here or beyond. Ethical value exists somewhere in the dedication of the agent to the action independent of his intention and irrespective of its consequence.

A Phenomenological Basis for Ethical Theory

Ethical thought has been of so great significance in the life of man and of society that numerous ethical theories have been worked out. These theories, the salient problems of which we have outlined, have encountered the very same problems that we ourselves just now uncovered. Hence it might seem reasonable to pursue the investigation with reference to some of those theories. One might accept, expand, or criticize them as the case would be. Presumably one would at any rate be farther along the road to a solution than if one began anew at the very beginning. Such theories would mirror the problem at hand and would give at least a suggestion of a possible solution to it. Yet, consonant with our previously stated purpose and method, we are unable to consider such theories even in preliminary summary. Without disputing their value, we cannot receive them as they are given. In themselves, without reference to experience, they are meaningless. In order to avail ourselves of their content, we should have to go far beyond the explicit formulations in which they appear; we should need to examine the presuppositions upon which they themselves are based, and to trace for ourselves the paths of logic from presupposition to experience to conclusion. Such an exercise, if it were performed diligently, should be a very

difficult one. Ultimately the task would be redundant, since no matter how specific traditional theories might be, we should yet be unable to understand them without reference to our own experience, and this experience to which we must in the end always refer should be accessible to us even without a theory from which to proceed. Experience is always only one, no matter from which direction it should be approached. If experience is to be the basis of investigation, the most direct approach to it shall be the most useful. The conscientious analysis of a given text will inevitably lead to the designation of experience as its basis. Thus, we may distinguish between investigations that must apply to experience as their foundation, and those other investigations that proceed from the analysis of some theory. Investigations that recur to experience may be called philosophical. Investigations that rely upon concept may in turn be ~~distinguished~~ divided into those that rely upon symbolic concept, specifically those that investigate a verbal or mathematical theorem, which may be called technical, and those which investigate a conceptual image which may be called scientific. Ultimately, all of these investigations are reduceable to experience. The conscientious analysis of a given text must inevitably lead to the designation of the experience to which it refers. Thus, time and again the study of language turns into the study of experience. Ethical experience is open to us all: we must describe how it may be found.

It is a matter of great importance to recognize that factual representations are already theoretical. The account of the action of the Good Samaritan is in itself theory, albeit a very rudimentary one. It is theory in the sense that it suggests to us a view of ethical circumstances in which we ourselves are not participants. We stand, as we consider it, outside of the pertinent action. We are ~~the~~ onlookers to the mercy of the Samaritan, to the suffering of the wounded man, and to the cruelty of the ecclesiastics. We presume to be their judges. Yet however intense our theoretical concern with the virtues or vices inherent in the actions that we observe, all our ethical judgment upon these circumstances derives meaning and point from the implicit assumption that we ourselves might have been in the position of responsibility. We answer the question, "Was this action good?" by asking ourselves, "What would I have done?" "What necessity, what desire, what purpose would have moved me if I had been passing along that road with the Samaritan and the Levite?"

We should like to find a less circumstantial description of ethical valuation. It is awkward to entertain so great a measure of indeterminancy in matters of such importance. We would prefer to posit ethical value with the intention in the mind of the Samaritan; we would prefer to attribute ethical

value to the consequences of his action. It would seem preferable to say that the desire or plan of the Samaritan, his readiness to help, his desire to aid a suffering human being, or in general the determination to bring about a more happy state of affairs in the world should be called true ethical value. And we do cherish such plans and such good intentions. As a matter of fact we all entertain them and they fulfill an important psychological function in our lives. But they are not action, and there is a gap of inestimable width between the intention and the action.

The ethical value of the Samaritan's act, then, was not in his general attitude of sympathy toward human nature, nor even in the specific intention to perform this deed. The ethical value of the Samaritan's act lies in the circumstance that in passing by the side of the wounded man and recognizing the victim's plight and his own physical ability to ameliorate it, there was a compulsion not resisted by any other consideration, to bend down to the dying man to aid him. Subsequently we shall try to explain the psychological basis of this compulsion.

Perhaps our analysis will not prove to be so far-fetched as it appears on first thought. The parable itself lends some support to our viewpoint. It tells not only of the virtue of

the Samaritan, but it stigmatizes evil in the person of the priest. From a popular viewpoint, the robbers would be the villains of the tale, but clearly here they are not. Their actions are irrational, impersonal, like the forces of nature, and the parable would be unaltered if its victim had been struck down by a storm. The Samaritan and the Levite are in analogous positions: they both travel the same road, they are both confronted with the same situation, but their views of the catastrophe are wholly different. Legally only the robbers are guilty. The priest and the Levite break no law, ancient or modern. If there was evil, it is concealed in the statement that the Levite looked upon him and passed by on the other side. The parable tells us that evil is indifference, blindness, absence of the compulsion to act. When they passed by on the other side, the priest and the Levite did no wrong; they simply failed to exercise this most significant of opportunities to act. Perhaps we should not blame them at all, because if they had been blind we would not have blamed them for not seeing, and in a sense they were blind.

If we have succeeded in transforming ethical value from an objective designation to a subjective compulsion under circumstances yet to be defined, we have reached a most useful

point of reference. This assumption is valuable particularly insofar as its application lends itself to a wide spectrum of ethical phenomena, and inasmuch as it provides an opportunity for ethical analysis devoid of virtually all conceptual presuppositions. Ethical value resides in the compulsion to act. Such action is deliberate to the extent that it is highly conscious, but it is not voluntary in the sense that there is no realistic alternative for the individual concerned. To be sure, such ethically valuable action is thought to fit into a framework of personal and social benefits, but as we have shown, both the premeditation upon the action and the consequences of it are remote from the critical moment, and this remoteness makes it impossible that the critical moment should be measured by them.

The experience of valuation we call ethical in reference to action; in reference to perception we call it esthetic. The ethical phenomenon is the concern with this specific action. We dissociate such valuation from its causes and from its effects in as much as they are not primarily apparent to us but must be inferred from logical considerations. We distinguish the value to the action from its consequence because this consequence is at best uncertain and cannot be anticipated with assurance. It would be absurd to assume that the value of an

action was uncertain at the time of its performance; in point of fact, variable depending upon subsequent course of events. The valuation of our actions at the time that we perform them is the primary ethical phenomenon. By comparing and relating this phenomenon to the various religious, social, and natural events and circumstances that appear to possess ethical significance, we hope to be able to trace ethical valuation as the expression of a fundamental propensity of human nature. If we are successful, we should become able to provide a more reasonable and effective basis for judging these phenomena and consequently for participating in them ourselves.

The Psychological Basis of Ethical Theory

Traditional theories of ethics are grounded in a conventional view of man and his relationship to nature. It was assumed that the world consists of objects and events. Man was thought to be such an object, and his actions were construed as such events. It was assumed that he could initiate, direct and terminate his actions at will. It was thought that he could anticipate his actions in all details and their consequences as well, that he could decide to engage in or refrain from action as it seemed desirable to him. Then ethics consisted in an explanation for the choice that he had to make. Clearly the characteristics of such ethical theory are largely determined by the psychological substrate to which it is little more than a decorative addition. If the subjacent psychology and history were erroneous, the validity of an ethical theory based upon them would be irreparably compromised. A more rigorous description of man and his relationship to nature might make possible a far more convincing ethical theory.

The life of each individual is constituted of innumerable motions. From a logical point of view there is no reason why each of them should not be designated as an action. Clearly traditional ethical theory ignores the majority of such motions. The behavior that is selected as action is always chosen from

a teleological point of view. The action upon which our attention falls is always selected with a view to its position in the interpreted scheme of reality. The extrinsic relationship of an action to other events seems far more pertinent to its designation than its dynamic or structural integrity. We designate actions as we do primarily to express the consequence of our intentions, or to designate the presumed cause of some circumstance in which we take an interest. When we speak of actions such as saving a man's life or conversely, taking it; feeding a starving child, or depriving it of food, we surely do not speak of simple movements, but in each case we mean a multitude of individual and individually demonstrable motions. They may endure or they may recur over a period of minutes, hours, weeks or even years. And it is nonetheless plausible for us to refer to them as single actions. The many wicked deeds that are punishable by law provide another telling example. Consider actions such as treason, fraud, or embezzlement; all of these commonly extend over a prolonged period of time. Note also that our designation of all these actions is an implication of their actual or anticipated effects, not particularly of the motions themselves. Accordingly, the praise or blame which we attach to any action is already predetermined in its definition. Thus usually the explicit valuation of an action is a redundant exercise. Valuation already entered into

its selection and description as an act. Conversely, there is no distinct 'action' apart from the valuation that distinguishes it, separating this set of motions from the many other indifferent and obscure movements of body and excitations of mind.

More dubious even than the mechanical definition of action is the attempt to define will as the cause of the act. We are accustomed to assume that virtually all our conscious actions are under the control of our will. When actions are successful, then will as the determination that brought them to fruition receives praise; when our actions are detrimental, the will likewise, either by its strength as the determinant of the action, or by its weakness for the failure to hinder it, receives the blame. But, rather than simplifying matters, this logical convention produces a curious duplication. For if the deed done is an action and is caused by specific will, then will itself must be construed as the prior action, which, as it were, would be the cause of the ensuing act. Thus we would have to hypothesize a chain of separate acts of will preceding the single efferent deed. Would such a chain not of necessity prove endless? If will is of itself action, would not will require to be willed? That does not solve the problems but only multiplies them, or perhaps conceals them in words. For if the source of the ultimate and most conspicuous act remains mysterious,

would not the source of prior actions remain even more inscrutable? The same problems of explaining the cause of the final action attend also the explanation of the will that presumably motivated it. If will is an integral and effective disposition of the self, in what way is it different from an action? But if it is not integral, or if it is not effective, then is not its proposition superfluous? If will is a separate action, then the same questions that I ask about the final action must also be asked about will, and the duplication would be projected innumerable times into the past. What is significant about the term will is the implication that an action should originate from within our being. To say that we 'will' an action is to assert that we should be the 'cause' of the action, that we determine that action and are responsible for it. Here arises the apparent problem that is commonly referred to as the question about free will. Whenever we are conscious of an action, we thereby assume that we act willingly. We believe ourselves to be the authors of the action, responsible for it, and conversely we assume that the action is dependent upon our intentions. We actually identify our existence at the moment with the action that fills that moment. This relationship will become more vivid, when one considers the situation if it were otherwise. Suppose you were not responsible for your action and the action were not dependent upon you.

What then would you be? Wherein would lie the actuality of your existence? The action would be yours and yet not yours. You should literally become dissipated in the numerous situations and onto the various objects ~~in~~ about which the actions take place. Whenever one's action comes to mind, one cannot avoid the assumption that he is responsible for it and that it expresses his being. With this explanation of will and this identification of will with the act, we have arrived at a description of ethical experience; and this ethical experience, if we are correct, must be the focus of any ethical investigation.

The Ethical Moment

We review once more the characteristics of the ethical moment. The time is the present; the protagonist am I; the decision, the burden, and the sacrifice are mine, and it seems to me now, that the reward shall also be mine. It is impossible to consider the ethical moment in the third person. It is irrelevant to ask what someone else will do, how he will recognize his responsibility, how he will seize the occasion. All attempts to understand the ethical present as problems for ~~the~~ a third person will fail to do justice to its intimacy and to its urgency. They will give nothing but a caricature of the ethical moment. Either their conclusions will be objectively consistent, then they will fail to reflect the desperate compulsion of the instant. Otherwise, they will introduce into a presumably objective description elements of subjectivity, which though they may seem to do justice to the quality of the ethical moment, will nonetheless as subjective intrusions in an objective description remain highly vulnerable to criticism and will be readily refuted.

The ethical moment requires me to act. It will not be fulfilled by my mere recognition or acquiescence to events. It will not be satisfied by my praise or my blame nor by my

intellectual comprehension of an historical circumstance. The ethical moment requires my active involvement in the situation that I recognize. This is not to say that physical motion is required; in the ethical sense I may 'act', for example, while yet 'doing nothing'. The significance of the ethical action is not the change that it produces in the objective world but the realization that it creates for the self. Many actions are vain and ineffective, but all actions are expressive of self. Thus, we may consider the ethical action not a transitive motion, but the mere disposition of the self in real, or present time. I am aware of the present as the matrix for my ability to act, and to the extent of this awareness I do act. My awareness of the potentiality of action in the present implies the actuality of that action. If I am aware of myself in the present, then even that which I fail to do, by virtue of my omission, becomes action. These definitions remove many of the uncertainties with which our understanding of action has become encrusted.

When the self is identified with consciousness, then clearly what we are and what we are not is intimately dependent upon this present moment. Although we may reasonably anticipate the future with its inevitable alterations, and although we remember the past as being distinct and different from the

present, yet future and past are relatively less real to us than is the present. It is true: future and past are powerful influences towards the relativization of value. But although as future and as past they mathematically exhaust the present, leaving it as the insubstantial division between them, they cannot exhaust this present empirically. Similarly value, though logically relative, must be recognized as being empirically absolute. What I am at this moment is all that I am empirically; my value, the valuation of self at this moment, is the sole valuation that consciousness establishes for itself. It is the valuation that consciousness is forced to accept from the circumstances to which it is subordinate. Consequently, there is a limited justification for the absolute interpretation of value, although such absolute interpretation of value has been over-extended. It has been forgotten that value is contingent upon immediate, present, conscious experience. Accordingly, ever since the time of Plato, attempts have been made to establish for value a position in the temporal and spatial projections of experience, i.e. in the physical world. Such attempts create many problems; they never succeed, but it is erroneous to deduce from their failure the fallibility of valuation in general. Those thinkers who attempted to find historical and physical instances of value could not but be impressed by this failure. Those, on the other hand, who were

more aware of the primacy of the empirical present, the poets, the artists, the musicians, were on the one hand unable to escape the hypothesis of an absolute value, and likewise unable to escape the temptation of postulating it as physically real.

The ethical moment itself implies a value. This value becomes explicit in the present only, never as a derivative of circumstances surrounding the action nor as a projection from some remote constellation of events or of objects. The value of the ethical moment appears to reside within the action itself. In particular, the value of the action is the value of the individual performing it. At the moment of action the value of it becomes identical with the value of self. In the moment of performance, the self is exhausted by its action. The consciousness of self is utterly dependent upon the action. In other words, what I am in this present moment, I am only in this action. In comparison with this action the memory of what I have been and the anticipation of what I hope to be are empty and vain. This action is supremely valuable to me because at this moment the action is all that I am.

This construction of ethical value applies fittingly to the parable of the Good Samaritan.

To be sure, ethically valuable action is frequently directed toward a goal historically determined. I act not only in the consciousness of the present moment, but also in memory of the past and in anticipation of the future. I act in cognizance of the historical significance and of the potential effectiveness of my deed. This awareness is the bridge between the subjective necessity of action and the objective, circumstantial desirability of the goal that even now remains conceptual. This bridge between the momentary consciousness of self and the logical conceptual interpretation of world is a very real, and oftentimes a very problematic link between these not always harmonious faculties of self. It does not refute our argument to recognize that our ethical actions are in fact directed toward specific goals in history. The variability and the haphazard contingencies of these goals is rather a proof of our theory. We may now reinterpret our desire for virtue, our love of the good, as the necessity of the self to assert itself: to become real in the present of consciousness. That is why at the moment of action, the greater its ethical value the more concentrated the consciousness of self. At the moment of ethical action self is nothing if not the fulfillment of this particular deed.

Historical Valuation and the Ethical Moment

The preceding analysis of ethical valuation was primarily a critical process. It stripped ethical value of its conceptual disguise; it removed from ethical valuation all that was trivial, haphazard, and unreliable. It left us with a definition of ethical value of whose universality, reliability, and power we may be confident. Yet for its very precision, this definition will appear abstract and empty; having invented it, our task is now to relate it to the historical circumstances and particulars of traditional ethical value. In all our emphasis upon consciousness and the immediate action as the sole valid expression of self, we seemed to ignore that we are yet deeply and extensively involved in a conceptual world, and that our understanding of ourselves and of nature remains a conceptual one. Thus the second part of the theory of ethics must be the description of the relationship between ethical valuation and the conceptual world.

We have seen that the absolute quality of ethical determination has, from the time of Plato, been projected into an objective framework of reference. This is the interpretation that we chose to give to the Platonic ideas. Their divinity, their power, their universality are the attempts to introduce

into the conceptual world the compelling power of the consciousness of self. The conviction that they carry is evidence of the genuine source from which they are derived. Yet the method of their derivation, this poetic transference of subjective necessity into a presumed objective conceptual cosmos is logically illegitimate; it has become the source of great confusion. Ideal value is convincing only when the value is general. The ideals are sustained so long as they remain non-specific. If we are correct in our assertion that the subjective ethical necessity is never qualitatively determined, that it never instructs us to perform one action rather than another, that it contains within it no intrinsic directives or goals, then the particular instructions which ethical ideals presume to give must be surreptitiously obtained elsewhere. Actually ethical idealization always remains approximate. All attempts to derive specific ethical instructions, as we shall show, either retain a large measure of ambiguity or become quickly impractical. We are confronted with a complex of ethical and pseudoethical directives that order our lives in the smallest as in the most significant matters. These instructions arise from literary, social, and political traditions; frequently they claim for themselves divine origin and sanction. The individuals who

elaborate and propagate such instructions are themselves not aware of the origin or implication of their legislation. They themselves cannot justify their instructions and neither can history.

It becomes permissible, however, to attempt to discover a pattern for the conceptual goals that are posited as the purposes of human endeavor. Such a pattern would remain entirely within the realm of concepts. Even though concepts that are illicit substitutions of reality deceive and disappoint us in our ethical aspirations, nonetheless concepts are also themselves products of thought, and as we shall show they are able to reflect the fundamental problems that arise for the individual in the course of his continuing confrontation with reality. We might consider, for example the preservation of human life to be a suitable ethical directive, or the prevention of pain and suffering, or the advancement of scientific, technical, cultural, and intellectual goals. In another place we shall find occasion to describe some of these ethical ends, to analyze the influence which the structure of consciousness has upon their formulation. Yet this much might now be said: they are not unequivocal; they harbor uncertainties and contradictions, and in no case can they be blindly relied upon to provide a valid ethic for the individual

at the point of decision. They are always general; they are always conceptual. The transference of concept to experience or as it is often phrased, the application of generalizations to the concrete instance, is always problematic. Indeed, the difficulties of application are ultimately explanatory of the inadequacy of such general formulas. All that is necessary at this point, however, is to recognize that ethical consciousness does not directly provide specific imperatives, and that their unqualified identification with ethical value is misleading. In other words, ethical value demands not that we primarily accomplish a certain task; it insists that we act vigorously and validly, the particular task at hand being but a device whereby consciousness accomplishes its realization.

It is one thing to act in the present under the pressure of ethical necessity. It is quite another to reflect upon past action with praise or condemnation. It is one thing to anticipate an action in the future, another to achieve it in the present. It is even more precarious to judge the past actions of others, whether in the face of their own denial or on the strength of their own confession, whether from personal observation and memory or from the hearsay of a chain of inter-

mediaries. When we attempt to judge our own past actions or to evaluate future ones, we make a transition between two modes of time. We presume that the deed to be scrutinized were of the immediate present. Yet such transference remains hypothethical: neither the past nor the future can be conjured into the reality of the here and now. The recollection or anticipation of the primary ethical value of events is indeed a difficult, if not an impossible task.

It goes without saying that we never act in a vacuum. Whenever we act, we rely upon an historical framework to guide us. Ethical consciousness impells us to action, but the particular goal toward which our actions should aim is provided by the conceptual system of our knowledge. Whenever we are roused to action, our cognitive faculties place before us a target upon which the energies of ethical determination can spend themselves. The circumstances and the rules of this substitution are not entirely clear to us. In part they seem to be derived from differentiations of primary ethical consciousness; in part they seem to be the expression of a preconceived historical interpretation of our world. But in any case, the conceptual framework within which we act only provides the stage and the opportunity: the energy of action is subjective. For these reasons, the judgment that we may pass upon our own actions either in retrospect

or in anticipation can never be adequate to them. And if our own judgment cannot be adequate to our own actions, even less will it do justice to those of others.

Historical judgments, for whatever they may be worth, invariably require the surreptitious substitution of the consciousness of self in the historical framework. When we judge our own actions, we project our consciousness into the past or into the future. When we judge the actions of another person, we assume that he in their performance experienced consciousness analogous to our own. To some extent, such a projection of our own consciousness of self will always be appropriate. To the extent that the agent possesses some similarity to the critic, such a projection is meaningful. As I propose to judge individuals who are progressively more different from me, this identification becomes less and less meaningful, until my judgment of action by a man of a distant culture is almost entirely vain. It goes without saying that it is impossible for me to judge the 'deeds' of animals or the motions of inanimate objects. The wind's blowing or the thunder of the sea are neither good nor bad. Likewise it is incongruous to attempt to attribute ethical value to the actions of groups of human beings, of society as a whole, of partnerships, clubs, corporations, or governments. The legal fiction that attributes

personality to such institutions is unable to endow them with consciousness. For this reason, their deeds are never expressive of ethical necessity, and it is meaningless to attribute to them ethical value.

While we judge actions whose circumstances are familiar to us as if they were our own, considering them to be expressions of ethical consciousness, those actions which are remote we consider as events and evaluate them as part of the larger historical system. Thus we may distinguish between the historical and the ethical value of an action. For example, we may recognize the heroism of the soldier's act in battle, yet we may find it useless, [illegible], or we may even consider the ultimate historical effect of that act to be unfortunate. From a more remote viewpoint ethical valuation disappears completely, and the action then becomes a mere incident in a historical narrative. Then we value the action in an entirely different manner, merely according to its relative position in the historical scheme. It is our contention that such valuation is essentially esthetic. The element of time has become schematized, and the event has taken on the properties of a conceptual object.

We must now state explicitly what the preceding analysis implies: there is a major discrepancy between historical valuation and ethical experience. Frequently ethical actions do

take place in a significant historical context. Always we would like our actions to have historical consequence. The hero, for example, wishes that his deed should win the war; the scientist wants his discovery to change the course of scientific study; the author wishes his book to become a landmark in the history of thought. Most of our actions, of course, cannot fulfill a role even approaching such significance. But, nonetheless, we desire that our actions should have some historical importance. This historical importance depends upon the frame of reference which, as we have suggested, is largely determined by our particular interests. Nothing that man has ever done, and conceivably nothing that man will ever do will be of any significance whatsoever within the ultimate dimensions of our cognitive framework. The valuation of the present disparages the historical imagination; conversely historical constructions belittle the present. Ethical judgments fit poorly upon actions and events remote from us; as we have noted, such events obtain not an ethical but what is essentially an esthetic valuation. Events that are remote from us have become conceptualized to such an extent that they are no longer suitable for ethical valuation. The conflict between ethical and esthetic value never arises.

The Realization of Ethical Consciousness

The theory of ethical value that we have outlined is more than a self-sufficient logical scheme. It may be applied to common experience, and it will be found to provide a better explanation for the phenomena encountered than did other theories. The action of the hero is convincingly explained. In fact, the heroic action is the pre-eminent example of ethical consciousness fulfilled. From that action we may obtain a vivid and convincing demonstration of the power of ethical consciousness. The heroic deed demonstrates clearly the fact that the entire value of self depends upon the present moment. Normally a man has an historical view of himself. He values himself, perhaps on account of his ancestry, perhaps because of his place of birth, his relatives, his associates, his occupation, his professional achievements or his country. Or he may flatter himself with some past accomplishment of his own, on account of the wealth that he has accumulated, or the fame that he has gained, or on account of the influence that he has exercised upon his fellow men. Again he may value himself with a view to the future. He may look forward to accomplishments not yet attained. If he nourishes very lofty standards for himself, he may esteem himself only as the potential victor of his ambitions. And if he is ambitious enough, he may even presume to set his

value in relation to the judgment that his fellow men will pass on him after death. In practice, most men entertain a mixture of such sources of self-valuation.

Contradictory to all such conventional sources of self-esteem is the attitude of a man of heroic stature at the moment of his heroism. Now he is oblivious and disdainful of the gifts of times past and of the promises of the future. For all that he has done until now seems insignificant to him; his claims to honor for past deeds seem trivial. His whole concern is with the present. His life, his existence as a person, derives meaning only from this deed that he is doing. He says to himself: I am nothing if I be not the one to do this deed. Such a judgment is the implication of his exertion, because there is nothing dear to him that he is not willing to sacrifice, neither money nor health nor life itself.

The heroic action always takes place within an historical framework. The action has some purpose, some practical consequences. But the sacrifice that the hero is willing to make is from any historical point of view always disproportionate to the gain that he personally may hope from it. He demonstrates to us by his attitude that life is meaningful to him only in the performance of this present deed, only in the fulfillment of

this precarious, precious opportunity. The significance of the heroic act is frequently misunderstood because of the practical impossibility of persisting in the heroic attitude. The opportunity for heroism is not perpetual. Man is not made always to be a hero; but the structure of his consciousness becomes apparent when the opportunity for heroism presents itself to him and when he proves himself capable of seizing it. Perhaps we honor the hero not so much for what he himself has done, but for the demonstration that he has given us of the true quality of human nature. The heroism of the deed is ephemeral. It will not be preserved, and as a consequence there is in the honor bestowed upon a hero always an element of irony and futility. If heroism implies a disdain of history, then history, although it holds in store fame for the hero, yet unmakes him. The fame that it bestows is a poor substitute for the liberty of the heroic moment that it takes away. In the authentic sense, a man is hero only in the moment of action. Perhaps only their heroism is immortal who fail to survive it. The others, who return home from battle, soon become indistinguishable from the rest of men.

In common parlance, heroism is often equated with duty. It is said of the hero that he 'merely performed his duty,' but this equation implies a misunderstanding. Actually heroism and duty are quite disparate. The hero acts pursuant to a determination

within him, according to a unique intersection of his own life with history. The hero's action fulfills a ~~unique~~ singular opportunity in his life, and the occasion for it is fleeting; the dutiful action, on the other hand, is always in season and is always required. The need for performing one's duty ends only with death. The historical determinant of dutiful action is the law. As we have already suggested, law appears as the instrument by which sovereignty is transferred from the individual to the state or to the community. We recognize now in the majesty and the eternity of law the compensation to the individual for the abandonment of his own sovereignty and independence of action. By conforming to law, the individual makes himself in all his evanescent strength a portion of an eternal order. The circumstances of dutiful action imply that it is continuous; its obligations are not fulfilled by any single action. The law demands continuing obedience and sacrifice.

The discrepancy between the need of self to assert itself in action and the incongruity of action in any historical framework is resolved, at least in a superficial manner, through the interpretation of action as a symbol. When we act symbolically we attribute a greatly magnified implication to an otherwise

insignificant action. This aggrandizement of our powers magnifies the meaning of the simple act. The numerous ceremonial rites of the churches are prominent examples of symbolic action. No less telling, however, are the secular ceremonies of everyday life. The handshake, the oath, the signature are all symbolic actions designed to compensate for the evanescence of the acts themselves, for their intrinsic inability to comprehend more than a single instant in time. For some symbolic actions the individual involved sets the significance of the symbolism. In other cases, as in the symbolism of language, a specific example of which is the power of signature, convention dictates a prescribed interpretation of the act. Thus, symbolic actions make possible for us a vast enlargement of the sphere of our influence. By pretending to raise us above the frailty of momentary activity, they give at least a moderate satisfaction to the demand of ethical consciousness. It will be noted that this satisfaction is given through a set of conventions that explicitly confirms and strengthens the conceptual implications of our thought.

Ethical consciousness is no mere logical postulate that sustains a clever theory; it is a faculty of the human mind, analogous for example to its powers of vision, of speech, or of conceptualization. This fact will become more convincing

if we review some of the well-known pathological deviations of ethical consciousness. We recognize qualitative and quantitative alterations of ethical consciousness, which shall be examined in turn. They will shed more light on our analysis of ethics.

Our hypothesis of ethical consciousness and its implications will become more lucid when we describe some of the pathological aberrations to which that consciousness is susceptible. We may consider two qualitative changes of ethical consciousness: the hypertrophy of ethical consciousness, a condition frequently called obsessive-compulsive. The absence or weakness of ethical consciousness is called psychopathic, a non-descriptive term which most psychiatrists consider unsatisfactory. Quantitative changes in ethical consciousness may be illustrated by the hyperactivity and the lethargy of manic-depressive illness.

It is generally agreed that obsessive-compulsive behavior is related to the normal performance of duty and the fulfillment of ordinary tasks as an unhealthy excess. Not uncommonly a psychiatrist criticizes as pathological what the ordinary man considers a justifiable emphasis on such homely virtues as neatness and cleanliness. In this particular area psychiatrists find it difficult to draw the line between health and disease.

The judgment of each individual example will depend largely upon the social environment in which an activity is exercised. It will depend also upon the effectiveness, purpose and usefulness of the activity in question. Mild ~~examples~~ instances of obsessive-compulsive behavior are quite common. An example is provided by the circumstances of a woman who is continually cleaning her house, even though she has no reason to expect it to be dirty and even though her repeated action makes no evident improvement in the condition of the house. She repeats her cleaning not in order to attain any practical goal, because the cleanliness of the house has already been achieved. Perhaps we may say that her satisfaction with herself as a human being falters except she be at this time performing this task. Undoubtedly cleanliness has significant ethical and esthetic implications for her, and it is likely that they determine the direction of the compulsive interest. Yet at the same time the evident absence of practical value of her actions makes it impossible to explain them so simply. This task is on her mind. She may remember having performed it in the past; she may anticipate performing it in the future; yet the rational inference that the task has been adequately fulfilled and that it may later be repeated on a suitable occasion do not satisfy her. The conceptual assurance that the house has been cleaned

in the past and may again be cleaned in the future, the logic of memory and anticipation, have become too weak to sustain her confidence in herself at this moment. Hence she must constantly repeat the same action. She proceeds as if it were necessary to prove that she was herself, as if she were able to discover herself only in this action. The significance that this action possesses for her becomes more dramatically apparent if she were prevented from engaging in the compulsive activity. She might then become restless and dissatisfied, perhaps even depressed. The inability to accomplish the desired task would represent the deprivation of a major source of pleasure and satisfaction. To the extent of that deprivation, personality itself would appear to have been injured.

The obsessive-compulsive action appears symbolic rather than practical. Probably one of the best criteria for measuring the degree of abnormality of such an action is to estimate its practical effectiveness. So long as house-cleaning serves to maintain the house clean and orderly, one hesitates to call it pathological; as it loses its practical value and becomes more and more symbolic, it can no longer be called normal. The standards of cleanliness in different societies vary, and likewise the amount of time and labor that is considered suitable to such a task. What is normal in one environment may well

be considered pathological in another. For these reasons, no rigid distinction between normal and abnormal will be consistent.

The more severe obsessive-compulsive habits must be considered pathological by anyone's definition. Such compulsions may take the form of the patients irrepressible desire to touch some part of his body, such as the chin or the ear, or to touch some object in the room each time he passes it, a chair for example or a door. These activities have apparently lost all purposeful content. They may still be called symbolic, provided that the symbolism is accepted as irrational, its meaning, if any, buried in the confusion of the patient's conceptual world. In its appearance, such a compulsive action is nothing more than a physical motion; the compulsion is the determination of the individual to perform it. Usually, communication fails and insight has become dimmed, and very few such patients are able to explain their strange behavior. These compulsive actions have become part of the personality; they may be understood as perversions of the ethical experience already described. The occasion for ethical compulsion has become trivial, purely formal. No longer is there a purposeful relationship to historical reality as in the healthy ethical action. The patient now acts as if there were literally nothing

else for him to do: the self has intimations of its weakness. Perhaps these purposeless gestures may best be understood as the efforts of a diseased self to sustain its integrity.

The so-called psychopathic personality exhibits an entirely different sort of disturbance of ethical action. Psychopathic patients have no concept of duty or of responsibility; they cannot be taught. Usually they act on the spur of the moment, capriciously, without conscience. Their disregard of precedent and consequence makes some of their actions appear heroic. The distinction between courage and rashness has been an ethical problem from Plato's day. But courage implies responsibility, and the psychopathic mind is notoriously irresponsible. To such a person it matters little what he does or what he fails to do. He takes little thought of his own welfare, even for his own life, other than for the satisfaction of momentary impulses and desires. He lacks the constancy of self to restrain his whims. Unable to imagine his own discomfort at a future time, he has little fear. Punishment fails to direct his thought to past errors. He is unable to recognize moments of decision, because the responsibility of decision is meaningless. Thus such an individual is incapable of benefiting from punishment. Usually it fails to ameliorate his disease; frequently it aggravates it.

This description of the psychopathic personality suggests that ethical consciousness may be a faculty of mind which on occasion fails to develop fully. If ethical consciousness gives meaning to action, then here are examples of minds for whom action has no personal meaning. For this reason the usual methods of education and correction are of no avail. The psychopathic individual is able to live with a very shallow consciousness of himself. To be sure, he possesses a rudimentary conceptual knowledge of himself as a person: like most of us he knows his name and carries a summary biographical sketch of himself in his mind. Yet this recognition of himself as an historical person is quite feeble and is incapable of resisting the suggestive stimuli of a given occasion. He is unable to accomodate himself to the social order. The injunctions of society find him deaf. For this reason he is able to commit crimes, even of the most vicious sort, merely because the occasion presents itself. He will steal for the delight of stealing, he will rob for the pleasure of robbing, he will kill for the thrill of killing. All these actions seem quite irrelevant to his selfhood. He has no conscience; he knows no guilt; he has no regrets. He does not require virtue to sustain him as a human being, nor does viciousness shame him. It is difficult to realize how greatly the psychopathic experience of self differs from that of the healthy mind.

The compulsive and the psychopathic personality may be taken to represent qualitative alterations of ethical consciousness. By contrast, the disease called manic-depressive represents a quantitative aberration of the ethical consciousness of self. The compulsive patient is occupied with the performance of a more or less empty act as evidence of the persistence and integrity of the self. His action assumes greater and greater importance as the integrity of self wanes. It is as if the validity of self required the symbolic action to sustain it. The relationship of the manic individual to his action is altogether different. In him the ethical consciousness of self is so over-bearing that he is not at all dependent upon any of his actions. His many deeds are scattered about like fragments of an overly rich and powerful personality. His actions, like the blossoms of the tree, far from sapping its strength, only bear witness to its might. For the artist and the poet a period of manic activity may be highly productive; many a notable work of art has been conceived and produced in such a state of mind. There is then a sharpening of the perceptive powers, a quickening of thought, an increased readiness and sureness of action. Given favorable circumstances, all that is profitable and productive in mental activity will then be augmented. And this profusion of his productive power and the attendant expansion of self may make the individual immensely

happy. The happiness of manic productivity is incomparable to all other gratifications. There is a vivid contrast with the drudgery of duty; there is here no sacrifice. In contrast to the agony of the heroic decision, there is no uncertainty. To the creative mind it seems as if the preparation of weeks or months had suddenly begun to bear fruit. Manic illness may occur also in patients who have no creative outlet for their hyperactive activity. Such patients are usually physically overactive, quick-witted and garrulous. Their words are trivial: their actions, conventional and superfluous. The need for motion and expression frequently exceeds the limited conventions of behavior, and the individual then becomes argumentative, quarrelsome, abusive, and even violent. Manic behavior also illustrates that self requires action for its fulfillment. Such action may not always give satisfaction and pleasure, yet it is a necessary expression of the consciousness of self.

Alternating with mania and in many ways diametrically opposed to it is depression. As the manic patient is rich, the depressed one is poor; where one radiates confidence, the other shrinks apprehensively in contemplation of the virtual nothingness of his being. Perhaps the depressed state should be construed as an intuitive recognition of the vanity of self. In this depression of activity, the self recognizes itself

as the shadow of activity. The self that is no longer able to act is a self that virtually ceases to exist as an integral being. As activity diminishes, self-esteem withers. When action fails, the integrity of self collapses. Probably a minimum of action is requisite to sustain the integrity of self. If depression deepens to the point where meaningful action ceases, the patient literally does not know himself any more, and significant disturbances of idea and reference ensue. The ability to act is the necessary prerequisite for the maintenance of consciousness and self. That self might be destroyed by a mere paralysis of its activity is a most convincing argument to support the proposed psychology of ethics.

The Injunctions of Ethical Consciousness

To this point we have been concerned solely with the apparent subjective necessity of action. Ethical valuation in general would be derived from this necessity, but we have said nothing about the qualities of the action to which our valuation is conjoined. Consciousness is not blind, and it does not commit its efforts at random. We have tried to show how action is indispensable to the integrity of self, and that the concern with action is the source of ethical valuation. The advantage of keeping such an hypothesis formal is the resultant freedom from specific parochial interests, an almost universal applicability of ethical concern to the most divergent purposes, and its freedom from the particular ethical ideals of a given historical epoch. If we have succeeded in this task, we have shown that ethical valuation may be explained formally purely as a phenomenon of human nature, and that discrepancies and contradictions of ethical ideals do not compromise their power or effectiveness.

We may now take a further step and attempt to analyze some of the actually prevalent ethical injunctions. Such injunctions vary widely in content and direction. They will largely express the particular needs of the societies and individuals who invent them. And as these requirements change, so will

the injunctions. On the other hand, the needs of individuals and societies alike will reflect particular situations in which they find themselves only to a degree; they will also continue to reflect basic qualities of human nature and fundamental needs of the structure of self. Thus the uniformity of ethical injunctions is not entirely haphazard. It need not be construed entirely as reflecting an external determination. ~~It is possible to~~ One may trace the qualities of ethical consciousness yet more specifically into the particular commands in which ethical consciousness asserts itself.

The consciousness of self that seeks realization in action is differentiated into numerous specific injunctions. We may conceive of the system of these injunctions as a hierarchy of commands that as they become more specific become also more dependent upon the practical situation to which they correspond. By the same token, the more general such injunctions are, the more they will reflect the ultimate qualities of ethical consciousness that controls them. The number of ethical injunctions is virtually infinite. Whenever a human being acts in the name of law, conscience, or the good, some specific ethical injunction must be assumed to have been fulfilled. In theory each of these injunctions, even the most specific one might be derived from the differentiation of the

primary ethical function with respect to the particular variable in question. In practice, such differentiation is difficult if not impossible. The purpose and the sanction of the injunction are almost always immanent to the formula in which it is expressed. On the other hand, it may well be of considerable interest to attempt to distinguish some of the more general and apparently universal of ethical injunctions, if only because their differentiation from the primary consciousness of self is often inapparent, and their seeming universality and wide dissemination give an inappropriate illusion of independence. We shall discuss four such differentiations: 1) Ethical injunction as the assertion of deity, 2) as the transference of subjectivity, 3) as the projection of subjectivity into lawful society, and 4) the projection of subjectivity into nature.

The Will of God as an Ethical Injunction

When the source of ethical value in human affairs is obscure and the postulates of ethical situations seem incongruous, then the origin of ethics is attributed like that of many other powerful and poorly understood phenomena to a supernatural realm. God is said to be the author of right and wrong; justice is synonymous with the fulfillment of his will. Whenever the question arises about what is good or about what we must do, the ecclesiastical mind replies with oracular precision that we must do the will of God. To him is attributed the quality of absolute goodness; in him is postulated the realization of virtue. It is his laws that we are said to transgress whenever we err; ultimately it is his judgment that we must respect, and his punishment that we must fear. Of course, such general formulas lend themselves poorly to application in specific circumstances. But then there are authorities, scriptural and inspired that presume to instruct us about ethical values in any given instance. At best the application of divine injunction to the specific case is haphazard, and the intractable problems of application often cast doubt upon the entire theoretical framework of theological ethics.

Perhaps it is an awareness that the compulsion of ethical action is not adequately explained by objective circumstances that led to the assignment of ultimate ethical responsibility to deity. When this divine responsibility is projected upon the world that we know as its objective cause, then problems arise that have defied all attempts to solve them. One will remember the famous riddle. If, as the creator of nature, deity is held responsible for reality such as it is, he must be accountable also for our own righteousness, or lack of it, a situation incompatible with the presumed freedom of our will. In any case, whose should be the blame when evil comes to pass without the concurrence of any individual at all? Considering the omnipotence that we attribute to deity, the evident imperfection of world is most embarrasing. If we argue that deity is not responsible for the world's faults, we disparage his onmipotence. If we hold him indifferent or unwilling to change evil that is within his power to control, we disparage his goodness. To say that evil is only apparent, that it is really only goodness in disguise, is to deny one of the most impressive ~~qualities~~ characteristics of human experience.

Ecclesiastical claims to the contrary notwithstanding, neither the church nor religion have a monopoly on ethical value. Much virtue is found remote from organized religion,

and separate from anything that might be called religious experience. Conversely, many practical undertakings of religion, individual or corporate, leave much to be desired in respect to ethical value. Thus the attempt to reduce ethical value to religious experience creates more problems than it solves, especially so long as we feel ourselves bound to accept religious doctrine as valid sources of transcendental cognition. Religious dogma as it is usually understood implies the imposition of ethical value from without individual experience. On the other hand, as soon as we recognize that religious phenomena are not confined to dogma nor limited by ritual, religion may be examined more freely as it appears in individual experience. We might then well discover a more meaningful relationship between ethics and religion. It should no longer be taken on faith that ethical injunction was imposed by an inscrutable deity. Rather it might appear that our relationship to deity, whoever and whatever he might be, should be understood rationally as an expression of the inadequacy and potentiality alike of our own experience. It would then seem that the religious concepts traditionally invoked to rationalize and to justify ethical postulates are themselves best understood as expansions and compensations of ethical experience. In other words, it is conceivable that instead of employing religious dogma to explain

ethical experience, Such ethical experience, if a primary reference to it were possible, might serve to give at least a partial explanation of and justification of religious institutions. If experience were indeed as transient and fragile as we have implied, is it not plausible that some such personal and social support as religion is able to provide should be required to sustain the existence of self? Undoubtedly many concepts and rituals of the religious life serve as such a supplement to experience. It is possible to accept religious conventions as a phenomenon of the inadequacy of human experience. Perhaps such a construction is most appropriate; it prevents the application to religious conviction of unsuitable logical criteria. By the same token it would no longer be necessary to tolerate all the conceptual impositions of religion. To accept religious experience as it is given does not imply the endorsement of all logical claims made in its behalf. Even so, such an empirical acceptance of religious experience might do greater justice to its power and validity than the many volumes of scholastic rationalizations ~~can~~ have ever ~~succeed~~ succeeded in doing.

Religious ideas have frequently dominated the state, and the injunctions of government have been overtly derived from religious doctrine. The king has usually appeared as the earthly representative of God. Obedience to him was vicarious

obedience to the deity. From the beginning of recorded history, religious institutions have lent their strength and their dignity to the support of the state; and the state in turn has taken a proprietary interest in the religious conventions and convictions of its subjects. The public ceremonies of our democracy ~~eloquently bespeak~~ clearly indicate that when a secular government seeks to rationalize its power it falls back upon religious belief and religious institution. The allegiance that the citizen owes to the state is still considered a derivative of that allegiance which he owes to God. The doctrine that the laws of a secular government are specific formulas of divine injunction fares ill in a state where legislation has become technical and impersonal. Yet frequently laws have been thus interpreted, and we should be at a loss for the source of the sanctity and necessity of law unless we could attribute its origin to a supernatural realm. The founding fathers believed the power of government to be a divine gift bestowed upon the people themselves as their prerogative, vested by them in their chosen representatives. It is conceivable that by implication deity is the source of power in every government, even where his position as patron of the state is neither designated in theory nor evident in practice.

The most general and perhaps the most difficult of ethical injunctions is the demand that we should 'do the will of God.' This injunction might well be dismissed as an anachronism, belonging to an era that the modern mind had outdistanced. Whatever lip service we pay to religion, the modern consensus of thought holds that the will of God has been repealed. We tend to put our faith in a contemporary atheism that proposes to operate the world-machine without divine assistance. If we admit him as the creator, still we emphatically forbid him to interfere in the creation. Accordingly, it is quite out of fashion to rely upon the will of God, and we shudder to think of the error of our forefathers who trusted in him. On the other hand, even if one is not prepared to assert a positive theology in the face of contemporary scientific scepticism, one may be made uncomfortable by the moral vacuum that seems to be implicit in modern rationalism as its inevitable concomitant. Perhaps the will of God has been surreptitiously replaced by ideas of justice, law, and progress. It is pertinent to ask whether such ideas are able to survive without reference to the will of God or its equivalent. Historically the notion that God should have a will, and that this will should be of supreme importance in the experience of mankind, has played a very important role. We will do well to ~~reexamine~~ re-examine the traditional injunction in the light of our description of self and

in view of our analysis of ethical consciousness. It is just possible that we might arrive at an exegesis of this concept that would do justice to its venerable history without offending the modern sceptical point of view to which it is so alien.

To understand the significance of the divine will to our ethical consciousness, we must recall to mind our analysis of self, the frailty of our existence as individuals, and our inevitable dependence upon a reality that is, as we have shown, ultimately inaccessible to our comprehension. The conceptual world, as we have pointed out, is the common denominator of both reality and self, participating to an extent in the qualities of each, yet being equivalent to neither. Evidently it is quite impossible for us to describe deity except as an element of that conceptual world. In other words, our ideas about God are generically comparable to other concepts, such as our notions of event and object. Or, to put it in a yet different way, all our ideas are concepts, and we are unable to escape from this limitation of thought. Deity is likewise a concept, but he stands in a special relationship to the other concepts of our intellectual universe. To assert that the objects of our world should exist according to the will of God, to demand that they should behave in consonance with divine law is to impute subjective significance to the conceptual world. Such an ascription is sometimes a

hindrance to the development of reliable conceptual knowledge; in other respects it is an unavoidable consequence of the characteristics of self and of its peculiar relationship to reality.

We have described the difficulties of defining self. What is meant by the pronoun 'I' is always ambiguous. The concept that I entertain of myself as an historical person is very uncertain and remote. The self need not rely upon conceptual formulas for evidence of its existence. The consciousness of self is able to find expression also in non-conceptual determinations. We have described the ethical expression of self, the urge to act, as one such determination of self. Yet ethical consciousness, so long as it remains dependent upon concepts essentially alien to it, remains impotent. This is as much as to say that although our ethical consciousness demands that we should do <u>something</u>, yet <u>what</u> we should do both in the particular case and in the general situation remains entirely unspecified. Our own will is without significance in the conceptual world. We must consider the injunction that we should do the will of God as a surreptitious attempt to impute to the conceptual world the specific quality of ethical consciousness.

The biologists never tire of pointing out that the preservation of life of the individual should be one of the chief functions of our natural endowment. Indeed much pseudo-ethical theory has occupied itself with the attempt to reconstruct the pattern of ethics as the expression of the human need to preserve one's own life and to perpetuate his being. Such theories are weakened because they content themselves with the naive assumption that the being of self is biological and that consciousness is identical with the animal life that may be objectively observed. However our own experience and what we infer to be the experience of the human race constantly lead us to an opposite conclusion. Human life is more than a biological existence.

It is true: the preservation of the physical health of the body, the prolongation of life to the last possible moment, is indeed a fundamental instinct of human nature. There is something perverse and iniquitous in the physical mutilation or destruction of the body. Yet as soon as we mention it, the example of martyrs and ascetics comes to mind. Right or wrong, they bear witness that there exists in human nature a desire, saintly or perverse, to regard the self as distinct from the body, and perhaps even opposed to it. Martyrs and ascetics consider their behavior not self-destruction, but self-preservation,

a liberation and glorification of self. Anthropological theories that demand only a biological preservation of life leave many facets of human nature unexplained.

If it is easy to criticize the identification of self and body and to designate its inadequacy, it is more difficult by far to provide an acceptable definition that might include the various apparent functions of self. In another place we have examined the difficulty of such definitions and their relative inadequacy. The radically empirical supposition upon which we base our thought insists that the understanding of self is limited by the immediacy of experience. It is only in this moment, when I perceive, think, and act, that I have the right to assert my own existence. Yet, paradoxically, if I were to be limited in my being to this moment, and if all that I had done in the past or all that I would do in the future, if the content of my memory and the power of my imagination were excluded as irrelevant, the contents of consciousness that might be proved or demonstrated in the present would seem trivial indeed. If I were limited in my being to this moment, I should be nothing at all. For this reason I must postulate that such perception, such thought, and such actions as constitute my being at this moment should be possible also at other moments. Of course, I have an historical opinion of myself as person,

and I may extrapolate the perception, thought, and action of the present moment to all other moments in my lifetime. However, such extrapolation will not do justice to my experience of consciousness. By its very nature this historical interpretation is remote and contingent. It is incapable of sustaining, except in a superficial sense, the actuality of this present experience. For in time past, I was not the same one that I am now, neither will I be in future time what I am at this instant.

In this dilemma we recognize again the intrinsic inadequacy of human experience. This natural limitation of our experience imposes an intolerable restriction upon the consciousness of self. It is the surreptitious function of our intellectual customs to mitigate this experience. Our recognition of this inadequacy of experience demonstrates a high degree of ambivalence. To accept our limitations is at the same time to deny their finality. This ambivalence is carried over into our notion of deity. The idea of God is comprehensible only as a concept complementary to the failure of self. Yet as soon as deity is postulated he is thought to exist in such a way as to relieve the inadequacy of consciousness. Let us equate that element which is assumed to compensate the failure of experience with deity. It makes no difference how this notion of deity is designated. The recognition of God is not a matter of nomenclature or of ceremony. He does not require formal worship. What matters is that this

sustenance of self should be recognized as a phenomenon that cannot be empirically derived, a complement without which all significant function of self becomes impossible. In this sense it is correct to say that the self in its existence is absolutely dependent upon the integrity and the power of a complementary element. The name that is given to this complementary element is immaterial; its definition is superfluous. We may rely on it, as on so many things, without recognizing or admitting our dependence. As soon as one understands the precariousness of the existence of self, then to deny deity is either to quibble about mere words or to accept a drastic depreciation of one's existence. Furthermore, one might question whether the depreciation of self that ensues upon the consistent denial of deity is compatible with any intellectual activity whatsoever.

Only a little thought will show that our hypothesis is extraordinarily fruitful, for it immediately gives us the explanation of the qualities that we attribute to deity. The notions that he should be all-seeing, all-knowing, all-thinking, and all-powerful are true complements to the failure of self. What I see, what I know, what I think, and what I do are severely limited. My vision is virtually meaningless unless there be

someone who sees what is visible but what I do not see, who thinks what is rational, but what I do not think, who does what is necessary but what I cannot do. And thus with the clear recognition of our limitations the notion of deity is upon us with all its power and virtual glory, and also with all its contradiction and embarrassment.

The sketch of deity as we have outlined it is more than a mere conceptual completion of the fragmentary status of consciousness. Consciousness is surrounded by that which is alien to it. Consciousness continually strives beyond the confines of its own present, and for its practical existence it is dependent upon rectitude and reason entirely beyond itself. Now, as a rule, these influences appear derogatory of consciousness: they tend to overshadow it, they tend to compromise and to deny it. The existence of consciousness in the natural world appears accordingly as a perpetual conflict. These objects and events which consciousness recognizes, these circumstances and relationships, constantly reflect upon consciousness and say to it: you are nothing, you are an illusion, you are ephemeral. And consciousness has a difficult time defending itself against the objective adversary, so much so that it often forgets itself and paradoxically denies its own existence and its own reality. But, as the theologians never ~~tier~~ tire of pointing out, deity sustains consciousness.

God is necessary to the life of man. What deity sees is complementary to what I see; what deity knows is complementary to what I know; what deity does is complementary to what I do. Only with the aid of deity or its equivalent as a complementary element, recognized or not, do human actions, sensations, and thoughts obtain significance. Thus it is eminently rational for man to say: "So help me God".

The actions that we perform may be assertions of self, but no matter how intensely our will is involved in their performance, no conventions of law or of duty can hide the relative insignificance of our actions as they become conceptually explicit. In other words, the ethical value of our actions pales in the light of conceptual analysis. No matter how determined our actions may be, if anything satisfies us about them, that can only be the fact of action not its consequence. What we do is invariably trivial, in all instances it is ultimately an insult to the integrity of self. For within the framework of the world that we recognize, all things that we do are vain, and to the extent that self were dependent upon the validity of its action, it should also appear negligible. Aware of this inadequacy, we postulate that we should 'do the will of God.' We have already shown that the concept of deity is an indispensable supplement to the limitations of our perceptual activity. Likewise the notion that there should be a divine schema of which

our actions might be the manifestation is a supplement to the weakness of our activity. Then this obscure and mysterious injunction that we should do the will of God might prove to be a logical device by which our actions obtain a measure of conceptual stature and validity. The action that expresses the will of God no longer perishes unsung and unrecorded, forgotten in the ocean of time. The action that fulfills the will of God is ipso facto elevated to enduring dignity and value.

Whether we say that this will of God which we do is a kind of self-deception or whether we say that it is indeed the fulfillment of our active being is largely a matter of words. Once we recognize the circumstance in which consciousness finds itself, the terminology with which we describe this circumstance becomes immaterial. We must note that the will of God such as we find it, is significant only from the subjective point of view of the individual about to act. When the individual recognizes the fallibility of his activity and views the events of history through the medium of this fallibility, as if this frailty ~~it~~ were a lens through which the world was recognized, then ~~our~~ ~~own~~ his relationship to the world is made ~~meaningful~~ significant only by ~~our~~ his assertion that ~~we~~ he in our action fulfills his a divine purpose. By the same token, when ~~we~~ he searches for this divine will in the conceptual world apart ~~and distinct~~ from the fallibility of ~~our~~ his own action,

when ~~we~~ he, in other words, views the conceptual world objectively, then the will of God appears as an illusion. The injunction to do the will of God is not a play on words. It is a directive that is formally powerful, yet materially empty. The error of the theologian is not that he instructs us to do the will of God, but that he pretends to know what that will is. For the individual enmeshed in the turmoil and uncertainty of action, the will of God is of salutary implication indeed. Entirely unrecognized, the allegiance to this principle protects and secures consciousness against the distractions of a conceptual reality that would otherwise quickly overwhelm it.

The Transference of Subjectivity

The problems that we considered in the previous paragraphs represent the most general formulation of the actual ethical problem. If, abstractly, the ethical dilemma resolves itself into the question, 'How can the self obtain reality through its action?' then the specific problem of ethics becomes, 'What particular action must I perform in order that the value of self should be realized?' Surely this question is contingent upon our particular situation. By way of contrast, the fact that I must act, the fact of ethical consciousness itself, is prior and independent of conceptual formulation. Yet when I find myself in this conceptual world, then it seems necessary that the ethical consciousness and the conceptual world should be related to one another. We have shown that the conceptual world irrevocably belittles consciousness. Esthetically, the consequence of this disparagement is that the world should be recognized as the creation of deity; ethically the consequence of this disparagement is the assertion that it is our task to do the will of God. We have shown how formally powerful these suppositions are; yet materially, how empty.

One will wish to refine and to elaborate such specific directives as seek to allay the negation of consciousness by concept. It will appear that although the specific ethical

injunction is a matter of accident and circumstance, yet those general directives according to which we plan and guide our actions and attitudes may prove to be reflections of primary qualities of consciousness. With this expectation in mind we may examine the ancient command that we should love our neighbor as ourselves.

The equation that this injunction establishes between self and other, between you and me, is remarkable particularly in view of our previous analysis of consciousness. The premise of this injunction asserts the concern of each individual for his own self. It demands that transition from egotism to altruism which is one of the bases of our social order. This injunction gives formal recognition to the fact that the self recognized as personality becomes assimilated into the society of men. We develop the capacity to see ourselves as others see us, and conversely to see them as individuals possessing consciousness comparable to our own. Only on the basis of such an equalization of interests does society become possible.

The reflection that enables us to recognize ourselves comparable to other human beings is, on the face of it, a humiliating rationalization. It contradicts the ethical and esthetic determination of self in the present. It fails to do justice to my experience of the necessity for action and of the unconditional

quality of perception. The 'love' of self is quite incomparable with any affection that I can ever actually summon for any fellow human being. This injunction to love one's neighbor as one's self is impractical, and all attempts to implement it lead to the embarrassing recognition that it cannot be complied with. We have pointed out in a previous chapter that the constitution of self as an historical personage is always precarious; it breaks down in many of the extreme contingencies of experience. Likewise, our ability to love our neighbor as ourselves frequently appears as a facile equalization, of some significance perhaps in casual and distant relationships, yet one that is liable to collapse under the pressures of intimacy and of need. As we have shown, personality is only one of the interpretations of the experience of self. The conceptual description of personality does not exhaust the consciousness of self. Conversely the attribution of selfhood to the other individual with whom I am confronted leads to a most peculiar attitude toward him. While I recognize him as merely another object in the sphere of my conceptual knowledge, yet if I attribute to him that quality of selfhood of which I myself am conscious at this time, then I assign to him qualities that are far in excess of the appearance which his person represents to me. Then I must assume that his person as I recognize it is only the screen behind which exists a

consciousness such as my own. This consciousness I could not possibly comprehend; it remains, no matter how familiar the person becomes to me, ultimately inaccessible. It exists solely as a transference of my own intention and intuition.

In social and political affairs, this awareness of the consciousness of my fellow human being as analogous to my own expresses itself in courtesy, generosity, and in the deliberate design of social and political instruments in which his opportunities and prerogatives shall be strictly comparable to mine. It is a remarkable achievement of our society, one which has been all too infrequently recognized and which has seldom received the praise that is its due, that we have dedicated our polity to the achievement of such an ideal of equality among men. Many of the urgent political problems that arise in our day may be traced to our failure to recognize the idealism of our attempt. For, if what we strive to achieve is a reflection of an intrinsic postulate in human nature, there is also within the real structure of our selves a determination that contradicts what we seek to attain. In other words, the difficulties of the task which we have set for ourselves arise directly and demonstrably out of the ambiguities of human nature. If the injunction that we should love one another as we love ourselves is a reflection

of our ability and need to live in society, then the incapacity to comply with this injunction is likewise an expression of the isolation of the self that is determined by consciousness. To be sure, it is the task of our political institutions to attempt to conceal this discrepancy. They make it appear that our intentions are entirely compatible with our natures.

Law as a Source of Ethical Directives

Whatever merit our derivation of value from the consciousness of self may possess, the trend of our argument will seem to many a practical-minded reader to be remote from the specific problems of ethics and morals. He will say, as has so often been said, that the intrinsic moral motivation is a poor and ineffective sanction. At any rate, it would be impractical to maintain a society on the strength of the simple subjective desire to act worthily. In the first place, considering the wide divergence of points of view, there would evidently be a remarkable failure to agree upon what course of action was the right one; and even if such a course of action were known, it would require enforcement through the injunctive and punitive powers of law. Then, turning to the law upon which we do in fact rely for the preservation of our society, he would argue that it was a mere set of practical rules by which the individual should be guided in his own actions, and upon which he could rely as being a constant and unchanging requirement for the actions of his fellow men, thus providing the framework in which their activity would become predictable.

The entire history of ethics might be rewritten in terms of the relationship between man and man or in terms of the relationship between man and society. It has been well argued

that the ultimate function of ethical behavior is neither a personal one nor a religious one but, in effect, political. It is conceivable that man had to learn what was good in order that he might become a useful and cooperative member of society. This hypothesis is fundamental to much modern political theory and it deserves to be carefully examined. It does justice to the exceeding importance that society possesses for the integrity and for the prosperous physical and intellectual development of self. It does justice also to the achievements of mind and body which man has been able to reach solely with the help of society. Yet, the undeniable importance of society to the integrity of the individual notwithstanding, a social foundation of ethical consciousness fails to account for the numerous experiences tending to show that ethics is an individual problem. The individual exists as a biological entity. He is born, he lives, and he dies to himself. Although the pattern of his life is irrevocably molded by the society in which he lives, yet in all important moments of his life, man is alone. His beginning and his end, his happiness and his misery can be related only to his individual existence. Nor has that society yet been built in which the individual is ultimately ~~and permanently~~ submerged in the destiny of his people. When an individual sacrifices himself to the state, as does the soldier

dying in battle, he does not necessarily thereby deny the value of his individual life. On the contrary, aware of the biological limitations upon his physical existence, he seeks in the heroic act to acquire a more convincing affirmation of his own self. Most decidedly the state does not have ethical priority in human experience. The frequent struggle of the individual against the interest and determination of community is a convincing argument for the primacy of the consciousness of self. Otherwise one should have to construe all individuality as a pathological deviation from a totalitarian community spirit. Between self and the state we recognize a conflict. It is the desire of the individual to act unhampered upon his own initiative, in his own interests and to his own ends. The circumstance of society precludes the exercise of all such individual initiative. Frequently the self is compelled to abandon and to compromise its subjective determination. Such compromise is one of the most remarkable achievements of the human mind. Always the individual seeks to determine for himself what he should do; he is ever desirous of personal freedom of action. The very existence of the community requires that to an extent greater or less, this freedom of action should be curbed in the common interest. The initiative of self conflicts with social control. This conflict goes deep into the structure

of human life, and the failure to recognize it or the attempt to conceal it with platitude or piety is a perennial fault of political thought. It is only when this struggle is recognized in its full dimensions, in its violence, and in its terror, only then will the resolution of the conflict, incomplete though it be, become comprehensible in its grandeur.

This compromise between the indomitable demand for self-assertion and the social necessity of submitting to a common will is sublimated in our concept and experience of law. The struggle between the individual's urge for freedom and the interests of society is allayed by the convention that all individuals living in that society should be subservient to a law that is superior to them all. The control that should be intolerable if it were exercised as the will of an individual ruler is not only acceptable but often even welcomed as manifestation of a more general necessity. We now understand why it should be that when a situation arises where the power of law resides in an individual, as it inevitably must, that person obtains an aura of sanctity in his official duty, whether as judge or king, governor or priest. When I obey the law, I do not sacrifice or abandon my individuality to the whim or caprice of another human being. The law makes no one a slave. It establishes between all men who are equal before it an equivalence

which at one and the same time does justice to their need of self determination and to the necessity for a common external control. Therefore, when I obey the law, I avail myself of a significant ethical opportunity. That is why conformity to law and virtue are so frequently found to coincide, and why the inevitable discrepancy between them is so painful a discovery, difficult to rationalize. Indeed many individuals lack the creativeness of mind that invents a conceptual framework for constructive action. For them, who would otherwise drift aimlessly through life, the performance of legal duties becomes a salutary confirmation of ethical consciousness and a consequent fulfillment of personality. Thus while law is the instrument by which all minds are bound to their society, law likewise is uniquely capable of providing specific directives for ethical consciousness. Then, by a miraculous transformation, as it were, the performance of lawful duty ceases to be an oppressive restriction upon ethical consciousness. It becomes one of the chief opportunities for the assertion of self. This transformation, its source and its consequence, the necessary and sufficient conditions requisite for its fulfillment, are proper topics of legal philosophy, an analysis of which would exceed the boundaries of the present exercise.

When the individual acts according to law, he no longer permits himself to be motivated by the haphazardness of his own desires. To an extent greater or less these become forbidden to him, and his consciousness then finds adequate expression and satisfaction in the opportunity for lawful action. There is at one and the same time a transference of sovereignty and responsibility from the individual to the state. This sacrifice is the price that the individual pays for the benefits of society. This alienation of a significant portion of his identity represents a transfer that is always reluctant, never complete. Conversely, the characteristics of all social organizations and of the state in particular is their arrogation of sovereignty from the individual. By nature, sovereignty is the property of the individual mind, and its transference to the state consequently represents a troublesome problem. Invariably the question arises how far this transference may be accomplished: at what point it must cease if the individual is to survive, to what point it must proceed if the state is to exist. The demands of society are opposed by the reluctance of self to abandon its prerogatives. To define this relationship is the acute political question of our day and perhaps also of all time.

The Projection of Consciousness into Nature

We may now generalize our conclusions concerning ethical consciousness. We have shown that ethical value is individual and subjective. It satisfies the need of the individual to become real in the present moment. The self is nothing at all unless it be something here and now. The self becomes real in the present action in which it is exclusively and exhaustively expressed. Hence it is not at all incongruous that the ethical values of different men differ according to the circumstances in which they find themselves. All attempts to establish general or universal rules of ethical behavior and especially to apply them unequivocally in a specific case will be found wanting.

Although our action and our perception is limited to the present, our concepts are not. We invariably strive to reconcile the momentary determination of ethical consciousness with the conceptual world in which our mind exists. Such reconciliations we have even now considered. Carefully examined they throw an illuminating light upon both consciousness and concept. These compromises are entirely adequate to neither consciousness nor concept, and so long as their intrinsic ambiguity remains unrecognized, they remain inevitable sources of contention.

We must complete the study of ethical consciousness applied, by a review of the manner in which consciousness tends to be projected into nature. We have already discussed three specific variants of such projection: the will of God, the recognition of the equivalence between my neighbor and myself, and the projection of ethical consciousness into objective law. We reconsider the second of these projections, namely the identification of self with the other human being. The original Biblical account of the Good Samaritan suggests that the Samaritan was of different nationality from the stricken men whom he befriended. The parable phrases as its central question: "Who is my neighbor?" the implication being that neighborliness ought not be circumscribed by family, clan, nation or race. To aid ones family or one's close friends is an instinctive desire and no matter of great virtue. The parable seems to imply an injunction to identify oneself with a yet larger circle of life.

This problem is a pressing one indeed in contemporary political history. The notion of equality among men within a state and of equality of states with one another can be

understood only as public acceptance of the maxim that each individual should accept all other human beings as potentially equal to himself, socially, economically, and politically. Such equality is most readily achieved in an homogenous society. The goal of equality is most easily realized among individuals whose abilities are comparable. There it is not difficult to bring about a transference of consciousness. This fact suggests that in itself the transference of consciousness is also an egotistical undertaking. In the personalities that very much resemble ourselves we see our own image, and by favoring them, we flatter ourselves; by protecting them from harm, we make certain our own security. Such a mutual projection of consciousness is the cement of all social, professional, and intellectual elites. When we love or protect the individual who very much resembles us, we are doing little more than assuaging our own egotism. Thus it has been recognized that one of the tests of our egalitarianism is our ability and willingness to extend the prerogatives that we claim for ourselves and for our peers to individuals and groups of men whom we must recognize to be significantly different from ourselves.

The ethical maxim speaks only of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. We then expand the meaning of the word neighbor to include not only the residents of our town, the citizens of our country, not only those who speak the same language or those who have the same intellectual tradition, we include even those whose societies are entirely different from our own. And we recognize as human beings also peoples in various stages of civilization, offering to them also the equality that we demand for ourselves. If our concept of neighborliness, beginning with individuals personally known and familiar to us, expands to include all humanity, it is but a small step to go further, and to include, as has so often been done, all of animate nature as the object of respect and reverence. There is really no good reason why the identification of self with other beings should be limited to the human race. The traditional and stubborn attempt to maintain an absolute distinction between human and inhuman life has very little basis in experience. The pretense of distinguishing man from nature has made it possible that all that was inhuman might be judiciously exploited for man's use. Perhaps this distinction is a for-

tuitous one; perhaps the biological definition that makes it lawful to kill an animal for pleasure but unlawful to kill a man except in self-defense is of ultimate validity. Yet whether or not it is a good distinction, it is not a natural one. For, on the one hand, we are always prone to bestow a high degree of affection on non-human beings. Consider, for example, the care that we lavish on our domestic animals, our dogs, our horses. On the other hand, it often requires a good deal of social pressure and of moral rectitude for us to be willing to recognize a human being who is socially, culturally, and physically foreign to us as our brother. History, both ancient and modern, is full of examples that show how easily this reverence for our fellow human beings may be wiped out. Given an unfavorable social environment, we are quite ready to treat him no less brutally and 'inhumanly' than we treat animals and objects. Men have always been ready to look down on those who differed from them in any respect at all, to enslave them, to persecute them, to torture and to kill them. These are the facts of history. It is well if we try to change them for us and for our generation;

but it is foolish to deny them, and they must be understood if we are to attempt to establish a world in which they shall not be. The transference of consciousness is easiest and most natural where the subject and the object resemble each other most. It becomes progressively more difficult as differences between them increase.

We have explained how it is that when we love our neighbors we attribute to them subjectivity comparable to our own. We do the same for example, when we love our animals, when we are distressed by their pain and saddened by their death. We demand of them loyalty, responsibility, and steadfastness similar to that which we as human beings demand and expect of one another. Such an approach to the higher animals is not without practical advantage and benefit. It becomes incongruous, however, when it is extended to lower animals, to plants, or inanimate objects even. It is meaningless to consider their activity conscious or deliberate. Is it sensible to say that the growth of the flower or of the tree, that rain or sunshine are good or bad, except with reference to

the advantage that human beings have from them? Yet, if we say that a dog is loyal, should we not say that the spider is skillful or industrious? Can we avoid the inference that the flowering and fruition of plants have purpose akin to our own activities? Where shall the projection of consciousness stop? Shall it stop with mammals? Shall we feed the dogs but kill the birds? Shall it include insects? Shall we swat the fly but permit the butterfly to roam? Shall it embrace even the vegetable world? Shall we tend our trees and nourish them with water and food but poison our weeds? Is it possible for us to distinguish the members of our world which we must revere from those others which we may use with impunity? Do we not properly revere the water, the wind, the sky and the earth even as we respect animals, plants, and human beings? The transference of subjectivity surely cannot stop with my neighbor. It does to some degree seem to involve all men, all animals, plants, indeed, the whole world. And how, if at all are we to escape the ridiculous predicament in which we now find ourselves, nudged to our

own physical destruction by our reluctance and unwillingness to harm anything else in the world? Is it not a law of nature that life flourishes on the death of other life? Is it possible for us to create for ourselves the memorable exception to this rule? Perhaps it is, and perhaps it is our task to attempt to do so.

* * * * *